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Allegra de Laurentiis

HEGEL AND METAPHYSICS

ON LOGIC AND ONTOLOGY IN THE SYSTEM

HEGEL-JAHRBUCH SONDERBAND

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On Logic and Ontology in the System

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Table of Contents

List of Abbreviations — VII

Allegra de Laurentiis

Introduction — 1

Alper Türken

Hegel's Concept of the True Infinite and the Idea of a post-Critical Metaphysics — 9

Chong-Fuk Lau

A Deflationary Approach to Hegel's Metaphysics — 27

Glenn Alexander Magee

Hegel as Metaphysician — 43

Richard Dien Winfield

Hegel's Overcoming of the Overcoming of Metaphysics — 59

Andrew Buchwalter

A Critique of Non-Metaphysical Readings of Hegel's Practical Philosophy — 71

Giacomo Rinaldi

The Metaphysical Presuppositions of Hegel's Philosophy of Self-Consciousness — 89

Elena Ficara

The Interplay Between Logic and Metaphysics — 109

Angelica Nuzzo

Hegel's Metaphysics

The Absence of the Metaphysical Subject in Hegel's Logic — 119

Robert Bernasconi

Hegel's *Faith and Knowledge* and the Metaphysics that Takes the Place of Metaphysics — 135

Paul Giladi

Hegel's Metaphysics as Speculative Naturalism — 149

Susanne Herrmann-Sinai

Hegel's Metaphysics of Action — 163

Andrew Davis

On the Limits of Language in a Hegelian Metaphysics — 181

Michael Morris

***The German Ideology* and the Sublation of Idealism**

On the Salutary Persistence of Hegelian Metaphysics — 197

Bibliography — 213

List of Contributors — 225

Author Index — 229

Subject Index — 231

List of Abbreviations

Hegel

<i>Briefe</i>	<i>Briefe von und an Hegel (vols 1–4.2)</i>
<i>Differenz</i>	<i>Differenz des Fichte'schen und Schelling'schen Systems der Philosophie</i>
<i>Enc</i>	<i>Encyklopädie der Philosophischen Wissenschaften 1830</i>
<i>Enc 1817</i>	<i>Encyklopädie der Philosophischen Wissenschaften 1817</i>
<i>Enc 1827</i>	<i>Encyklopädie der Philosophischen Wissenschaften 1827</i>
<i>Gl&Wi</i>	<i>Glauben und Wissen</i>
<i>GW</i>	<i>Hegel, Gesammelte Werke</i>
<i>PhG</i>	<i>System der Wissenschaft. Erster Theil, die Phänomenologie des Geistes</i>
<i>RPh</i>	<i>Naturrecht und Staatswissenschaft im Grundrisse. Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts</i>
<i>TWA</i>	<i>Hegel. Werke in zwanzig Bänden. Theorie Werkausgabe</i>
<i>V</i>	<i>Vorlesungen. Ausgewählte Nachschriften und Manuskripte</i>
<i>VGeist</i>	<i>Vorlesungen über die Philosophie des Geistes (V 13)</i>
<i>VGesch</i>	<i>Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte (V 12)</i>
<i>VGPh</i>	<i>Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie (V 6–9)</i>
<i>VRel</i>	<i>Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion (V 3–5)</i>
<i>WL</i>	<i>Wissenschaft der Logik</i>

Kant

<i>AA</i>	<i>Kants gesammelte Schriften (Akademiedition)</i>
<i>KpV</i>	<i>Kritik der praktischen Vernunft (AA V)</i>
<i>KrV</i>	<i>Kritik der reinen Vernunft (AA III, IV)</i>
<i>KU</i>	<i>Kritik der Urteilskraft (AA V)</i>
<i>MAN</i>	<i>Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaften (AA IV)</i>
<i>Prol</i>	<i>Prolegomena zu einer jeden künftigen Metaphysik, die als wissenschaftlich wird auftreten können (AA IV)</i>

Marx, Engels

<i>MEW</i>	<i>Marx-Engels Werke</i>
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Allegra de Laurentiis

Introduction

The thirteen essays here collected were first presented at the twenty-third meeting of the Hegel Society of America, held from October 31 to November 2, 2014 at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois.

The conference title was “Hegel Without Metaphysics?” but this collection bears the title *Hegel and Metaphysics* in acknowledgement of the fact that all of the presenters, though from different perspectives and to different degrees, answered the question in the negative. They broadly acknowledged that Hegel’s system, though certainly not every subsection of it, is an integral part of the controversial history of western metaphysics—even if, or rather because, Hegel intends to “sublate” that history in his philosophy.

Metaphysics: a very large tent of a word, at once a storeroom, house and sanctuary of colossal dimensions. It is perhaps not accidental that, just as Aristotle’s “being,” metaphysics has been and continues to be “said in many ways.” Beyond its role as the posthumous and rather fortuitous title of fourteen Aristotelian books, metaphysics has been practiced throughout the history of western philosophy under such disparate names as first philosophy, ontology, first science, theology—even as “science of logic.”

Yet in the twentieth century, the history of metaphysics appeared to some as having come to an end. In the span of less than ten years philosophers who are thought to inhabit opposite regions of the philosophical landscape published seminal essays with identical titles and the same ambitious goal: “*Die Überwindung der Metaphysik*” (Carnap in 1932, Heidegger in 1938/39). Analytically and continentally inspired thinkers have been wrestling ever since with various alternatives: ignoring metaphysical problems, renaming them, dissolving them into questions of language, ideologizing them, setting them up in strawman arguments (say, the canon’s alleged “forgetfulness of Being”), or boldly declaring them to be remnants of the history of nonsense.

As the essays here presented demonstrate, this “fury of destruction” did not last long past the end of the last century. Recent analytic philosophy does not label as “merely metaphysical” every problem that science cannot solve. It is seriously committed to inquiry into ontological themes (*entia*, *qualia*, thinghood, mind) while it qualifies its research as (purely) formal ontology or (merely) descriptive metaphysics in order to ensure minimal contamination by the perceived insanity of historical *metaphysica generalis*. While the anti-metaphysical rhetoric of influential strands of existential phenomenology has been even stronger than that of its original neopositivist contenders, its simultaneous embrace of the

themes and concepts of *metaphysica specialis* appears to have been (and to still be) impassioned. Dramatic calls to overcome “onto-theology” (believed to be co-extensive with metaphysics *tout court*), for example, have generated equally dramatic returns to what Kant would have called a “metaphysics as mere rhapsody” concerning The Event, or what Hegel would have identified as a return to the pre-critical thinking of the “essentialities” (*die Wesenheiten*) of things.

Even so, Hegel’s own criticism of metaphysical theorizing, on the one hand, and his pervasive incorporation of metaphysical concepts and deductions into his account of the real, on the other, present scholars with highly challenging problems (to use an understatement). With regard to the first of these issues, Hegel’s judgments about metaphysics as a discipline include, to choose but one example, both the chastisement of “old metaphysics” and the glorification of Aristotle’s *De anima* as “the only work of speculative interest” written on the soul in two millennia. Thus one might have to conclude that “old” or “hitherto metaphysics” is not meant to refer to Greek thought but only to Scholastic and pre-critical metaphysics.

With regard to the second issue, i.e., the vital role of metaphysical notions in the philosophies of nature and of spirit, an even moderately close reading of the texts shows that the *Realphilosophie* is neither merely prefaced by nor only schematically built upon the science of thought thinking itself. At every step, the Logic’s categories and their necessary connections bleed into the conceptual sequencing, the arguments, and the detailed accounts of the most familiar—and indeed prosaic—phenomena of the mechanical, physico-chemical and organic systems of nature, as well as into those of spirit in its subjective, objective, and absolute dimensions. The natural psyche, to name a familiar phenomenon not as central to the Philosophy of Spirit as, say, “consciousness” or “right” (only appearing as it does in the first subsection of the first division of the third part of the system) is a reality that Hegel explains in terms of its Being (the sentient soul), its Essence (the soul feeling her sentience), and its full-fledged Concept (the actuality of fully active soul).

This picture is further complicated by the well-known fact that at every juncture of the system Hegel expects his readers not only to be familiar with all the preceding parts, but actually to be on their second (preferably third) reading through it, so that they may be persuaded by the particular conclusion at hand in light of their knowledge of the whole—including the ultimate self-disclosure of reality, *via* speculative philosophy, as syllogism of syllogisms. Yet in fact the panoramic view is not always necessary when, for example, what is at stake is only a particular critical reflection on a specified set of scientific, religious, social or psychological themes treated in Hegel’s system. Thus many valuable con-

tributions to Hegel studies exist that do not appeal at every turn to the True as the Whole.

In view of all this, the past and present skepticism of some scholars with regard to Hegel's reliance on metaphysical thought is fully understandable and is indeed a welcome opportunity for a text-oriented, non-ideological debate about Hegel's work and its legacy. This is the opportunity that the Hegel Society took at the Northwestern University conference.

* * *

The essays in this volume take seriously the systematic character of Hegel's philosophy. They take metaphysical thinking itself equally seriously, just as Hegel does, in both its historical existence as a millenary body of work and in the role it plays in our ongoing rational inquiries into nature, history, political life, and action. The common focus of the highly diverse contributions presented here lies in the recognition that controversies about the presence, absence or sublation of metaphysics in Hegel's work need to be squarely addressed (and some perhaps put to rest) through a painstaking analysis of what Hegel means by *Metaphysik*.

One of the major strengths of the volume as a whole consists, I believe, in the fact that all contributors move well beyond the stalemate opposition between an "analytic" and a "continental" understanding of Hegel's philosophy. They also show persuasively that the exclusive disjunction between "pro-metaphysical" and "anti-metaphysical" readings is a false alternative, if for no other reason than Hegel's explicit—and, some would say, characteristically equivocal—self-understanding: "Thus *logic* coincides with *metaphysics*, with the science of *things* grasped in *thoughts*" (*Encyclopaedia* of 1830, § 24). It should come as no surprise that several contributors indicate a qualified return to Aristotelian ontology as a viable interpretation of Hegel's position. Indeed, the most ancient statement of what Hegel here calls "coincidence" (*Zusammenfallen*) also marks the closing of the *Encyclopaedia*: "But by partaking in what it thinks, thinking [*nous*; Hegel: *die Vernunft*] thinks itself [...] so that thinking and what is thought are the same. For thinking is what is receptive of the intelligible and of the essence [*ousia*; Hegel: *die Wesenheit*]" (*Metaphysics* Λ, 1072b 20; *Encyclopaedia* 1830, §577).

Six of the following essays address the issue at stake from the eagle's eye perspective of the whole system. They do so, however, from quite different angles: the centrality of the concept of the "true infinite" in the *corpus*; the meaning of the 'unity' of logic and metaphysics in the *Science of Logic*; the viability of reading Hegel as an unapologetic metaphysician; the absence of a metaphysical subject of thinking from Hegel's Logic; the presuppositions and conse-

quences of Hegel's criticism of the critique of metaphysics; and the need for a 'deflation' of Hegel's metaphysical semantics. The other seven contributions discuss Hegel's metaphysical commitments with regard to special themes: self-consciousness, practical philosophy, the legacy of Hegelian categories in existential phenomenology and postmodernism, philosophical holism, naturalism, human agency, and the problem of language and thought.

Chapter 1, by Alper Türken, discusses a concept that can be considered paradigmatic of the nature of speculative thought: true infinity. The centrality of this logical figure already calls into question the supposedly non-metaphysical character of Hegel's philosophy. But even Hegel's turn away from Kantian transcendentalism (hence from Kant's critique of his own predecessors) cannot be understood, Türken argues, without grasping the new conceptual resources provided by Hegel's novel notion of true infinity.

Chapter 2, contributed by Chong-Fuk Lau, argues instead in favor of reading the Hegelian thesis of the identity of logic and metaphysics as a move toward "deflating" metaphysics into logic and semantics. By clarifying key concepts that underlie human experience and understanding, Hegel's "logico-metaphysics" amounts then to a second-order systematization of the fundamental, historically developed notions of our theoretical and practical orientation in the world.

A very different emphasis is found in Glenn Magee's chapter 3. Magee stresses that Hegel's explicit rejections of metaphysics refer to pre-critical thinking and not to metaphysics *tout court*—witness Hegel's own characterization of his dialectical logic as a new kind of metaphysics. For otherwise, it would be difficult to explain Hegel's employment of ontological categories—even pre-critical ones—in the *Science of Logic* and elsewhere in the system. Magee argues that overwhelming textual evidence is not the only factor supporting the claim that this philosophy is metaphysically grounded. It is precisely the recognition of Hegel's body of work as a contribution to metaphysical theorizing that allows for a genuinely illuminating interpretation of his thought.

Richard Winfield argues in chapter 4 that Kant's and Nietzsche's very different repudiations of metaphysical thinking are both themselves subject to repudiations supplied by Hegel in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* as well as in the *Science of Logic*. Winfield discusses the consequences that this Hegelian "overcoming of the overcoming" of metaphysics bears for the future of metaphysical thought in philosophy.

Chapter 5, by Andrew Buchwalter, acknowledges the value of non-metaphysical Hegel interpretations. Nonetheless, Buchwalter argues, a judicious analysis of three notions that are key to Hegel's practical philosophy—the idea of objective spirit, the concept of realized freedom, and that of dialectic—shows that appreciating the metaphysical foundations of Hegel's claims enhances our grasp of

the meaning and ongoing value of his practical philosophy instead of obscuring it, as some interpreters have maintained.

In chapter 6, Giacomo Rinaldi carefully delineates the distinction between Scholastic ontology, Cartesianism, Spinozism and Leibnizian metaphysics, on the one hand, and Hegel's speculative philosophy, on the other. In Rinaldi's view, the latter is an intrinsically metaphysical enterprise developed from the perspective of reason, not of the understanding. Speculative philosophy maintains a coherence theory of truth while also allowing for the "unity of opposites" to attain the position of highest law of logic. This enables Hegel to explicate the Absolute as an infinite process of real mediations (God as infinitely creative absolute spirit), thus making the designation of "panentheistic metaphysics" the most apt name for Hegel's philosophical project.

Elena Ficara's chapter 7 challenges the thesis, put forward by Anglo-American scholars as well as influential European interpreters, that the declared "identity" of logic and metaphysics amounts to the "deflation" (see chapter 2) or even the outright dismissal of metaphysics as a rational form of inquiry based on historically dated forms of thought. Ficara shows that Hegel's rejection of pre-critical dogmatic metaphysics goes hand in hand with his rehabilitation (*mutatis mutandis*) of Aristotelian metaphysics. Instead of signaling the mutual reduction of metaphysics and logic, Hegel's tracing of both to their common roots plays an important role even in contemporary metaphysics and philosophy of logic.

In chapter 8, Angelica Nuzzo focuses on the bridging role that Kant's transcendental logic plays between pre-critical metaphysics, Hegel's dialectical-speculative logic, and metaphysics "proper." The essay first analyzes the different types of metaphysical thinking that Hegel either rejects or embraces and, moreover, the peculiar relation of his Logic to the latter type. Nuzzo then shows that Hegel's idea of logical thinking (the object of the speculative science of logic) is, as Hegel himself states, "objective" in the sense that it does not presuppose any kind of metaphysical subject.

In the conference's presidential address, Robert Bernasconi (chapter 9) argues that Hegel's approach to metaphysics, including his Logic, is governed by his conception of the history of philosophy. While metaphysics may be a past mode of thought, it is also pervasive in every philosophy of the present. Just as "religion can probably exist without philosophy but philosophy cannot exist without religion" (as stated in the 1827 *Encyclopaedia*), so metaphysics, including the "old" one, is not a separable sub-discipline of what can only develop as a genuine whole. Bernasconi shows how dialectical conceptions such as that of the interdependency of opposites are adopted by contemporary thinkers like Heidegger and Derrida in their attempt to "overcome metaphysics"—a formula-

tion that, in this light, Bernasconi judges to be misleading. Whatever our own contemporary interests may be, the essay concludes, a Hegel without metaphysics is not a deflated Hegel, but Hegel's corpse.

In chapter 10, Paul Giladi investigates Hegel's explicit and implicit metaphysical commitments and concludes that they are principally of the "naturalist variety," thus making this kind of inquiry into the real both effective and legitimate. Giladi argues in favor of the need to recognize that this particular metaphysical dimension of Hegel's philosophizing—"speculative naturalism"—is informed by both Aristotelian first philosophy and Kantian criticism.

Hegel's theory of human intentional action is at the center of Herrmann-Sinai's contribution (chapter 11). She elucidates the necessary connection between Hegel's theory of self-determined action in the *Philosophy of Spirit* and the account of the Concept's self-determination in the *Logic*. This is done by means of a comparison with Kant's treatment of self-legislation, self-determination, and the relationship between them. While Hegel maintains this Kantian framework, Herrmann-Sinai argues, he lifts its terms onto a different level and integrates them into the logical analysis of the Concept. The Doctrine of the Concept, especially its account of the syllogism, is key to understanding Hegel's explication of our self-determination in intentional action.

Chapter 12, by Andrew Davis, focuses on contemporary controversies (and their historical precedents in Herder and the early Hegel) regarding the alleged co-extensiveness of thought and language. Davis's contribution offers a detailed analysis of the most extensive passages Hegel ever dedicated to language (in *Subjective Spirit's Psychology*, especially in the sections on Recollection and Memory). Hegel's position in these mature texts differs from his earlier Herderian outlook, on account of which Hegel's conception of language has been recently interpreted as regressive and dualistic. Davis defends Hegel's mature position as a non-regressive and non-dualistic one that is also entirely consistent with the philosophy of spirit and its metaphysical commitments.

In the concluding chapter, Michael Morris offers a new outlook on "Hegel and Metaphysics" from the perspective of a post-Hegelian development, namely Marxian theory. Morris shows that one of the most explicitly anti-Hegelian works by Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, actually embraces two of Hegel's ontological claims. In any given account of the real, (i) the grasp of the whole has priority over that of the parts, and (ii) the fundamental category of the real, substance, refers to a teleological process. *The German Ideology's* recapitulation of crucial passages from Hegel's *Philosophy of Spirit* is thus based on Hegelian ontology, which is precisely what allows Marx-Engels to overcome the originally positivistic character of their work.

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Alper Türken

Hegel's Concept of the True Infinite and the Idea of a post-Critical Metaphysics

Introduction

Recent debate in Hegel scholarship is centered on the tension between two opposing interpretative strategies. The so-called metaphysical interpretations of Hegel put the emphasis on giving an account of Hegel's position that yields the highest fidelity with his texts in view of the entirety of his corpus.¹ For the metaphysical interpreters, Hegel's works on logic are generally the primary focus. In their eyes, aspects of Hegel's philosophy such as ontological monism and systematic holism,² which are widely held to be unfriendly to the contemporary philosophical culture, are considered essential. Reading Hegel in a way that abstracts from those aspects is taken as an inadmissible distortion of Hegel's historical project. For the metaphysical interpreters, identifying different interpretative options that would maximize the relevance of Hegel's thought to the problems of contemporary philosophy is a motive that is peripheral at best.

The other pole of the tension consists of non-metaphysical interpretations that self-admittedly reject at least some aspects of the historical Hegel but focus on establishing strong connections between some elements of his thought and problems of contemporary philosophy. In my view, for the non-metaphysical interpreters the debate is hardly about which interpretation is a more accurate representation of the historical Hegel.³ Their primary motive is appropriating Hegel's thought to maximize its relevance to our contemporary context. This does not mean of course that non-metaphysical interpreters think the metaphysical interpretations to be giving an accurate picture about Hegel, but it is fair to say that non-metaphysical interpreters consciously allow themselves a higher level of liberty in being selective about reading Hegel's texts or emphasizing

1 Ch. Taylor, R.-P.Horstmann, F. Beiser and S. Houlgate are some of the leading figures among the metaphysical interpreters of Hegel.

2 Non-metaphysical interpreters of Hegel, such as R. Brandom, can be friendly to Hegel's holism as long as that holism is taken as limited to the semantic domain and as not extending to an ontological holism.

3 Pippin, Pinkard and Brandom can be counted among the leading non-metaphysical interpreters of Hegel who openly distance themselves from some aspects of Hegel's thought. Brandom's *de re* interpretation in particular is an innovative and systematic example of such distancing.

some Hegelian themes at the expense of others. For the non-metaphysical interpreters, in many cases the primary focus is on the *Phenomenology of Spirit* rather than the *Science of Logic*. Over the years, metaphysical interpreters have pointed out several shortcomings of the non-metaphysical readings in doing justice to Hegel's authentic position.⁴ On the other hand, unlike non-metaphysical readings,⁵ they have so far not succeeded in articulating specific ways in which Hegel's thought can play an active role in the context of contemporary philosophy. Horstmann argues that the only ones who should expect to find something philosophically valuable in Hegel's legacy are those who share with him the sentiment that there is something fundamentally wrong about our traditional ways of attaining a correct conception of reality (Horstmann 1999, p. 286). In my view, it is precisely this insight that makes it particularly difficult for the metaphysical interpreter to integrate Hegel's thought into the context of contemporary philosophy, as this interpretation finds a fundamental incompatibility between Hegel's and conventional contemporary conceptions of reality.

It may seem that the optimal compromise could be to identify an interpretative strategy that remains loyal to the spirit of the historical Hegel⁶ without being forced to affirm the entirety of his philosophical commitments, while at the same time looking for ways to connect his thoughts to our contemporary philosophical and broader intellectual problems. However, given the strongly systematic and holistic character of Hegel's thought, the suitability of such an approach to not distort Hegel's authentic position remains controversial. It remains unclear which philosophical commitments of Hegel's are to be considered as core, and which ones as collateral.⁷ Consequently, we do not seem to have a principled approach ready at hand for distinguishing a critical reading of Hegel from a philosophical position which is merely influenced or inspired by him.

⁴ See Beiser 1995; Horstmann 1999, 2006a; and Houlgate 2009, for some of the major lines of argument against non-metaphysical interpretations.

⁵ Brandom 1998 should be considered as a primary example here. In his introduction to Sellars 1997, p. 8–9, Rorty refers to Brandom's work as "attempting to usher analytic philosophy from its Kantian to its Hegelian stage." Although the faithfulness of Brandom's Hegel to the historical Hegel remains highly controversial, Brandom's innovative appropriation of some Hegelian themes into the context of linguistically-oriented neo-pragmatism is undeniable.

⁶ Note that in many ways this is what Pippin does, and with considerable success. However, I will argue in this paper, to the extent that we hold that the spirit of Hegel's philosophy is speculative, one has to admit that Pippin's interpretation is not Hegelian in spirit.

⁷ One may argue that such a distinction of core and collateral commitments is incompatible with holism in the Hegelian sense. I will argue in what follows that it need not be so.

Centrality of the True Infinite in Hegel's Philosophy

I argue for one interpretative and one philosophical claim in this paper. My interpretative claim is that a viable interpretation of Hegel, in distinction from a philosophical position that is merely inspired by him, should accommodate the concept of the true infinite in a manner faithful to its meaning for Hegel.⁸ In my view, the primary interpretative challenge facing us today regarding Hegel's system is to demonstrate the possibility of interpreting the concept of the true infinite, in ways that are consistent with Hegel's usage, while still allowing us to integrate this concept into the context of contemporary philosophical and broader intellectual problems. The choice of the true infinite instead of other logical concepts like substance, actuality, Concept, or Idea, or instead of phenomenological concepts like self-consciousness, recognition, *Bildung* or reason, all of which have fundamental functions in Hegel's system, is not arbitrary. My claim is that the concept of the true infinite involves the conceptual kernel of all the richer speculative concepts. In the *Encyclopedia Logic*, Hegel calls the true infinite the basic concept of philosophy (cf. *Enc* § 95R). In the *Science of Logic* he writes that the true infinite "gives us the nature of speculative thought displayed in its determining feature" (*WL GW* 21.139). Metaphorically speaking, the true infinite is the conceptual DNA of the rest of Hegel's logical system. One can understand speculative logic as the self-development of the Concept only if one understands what Hegel means when he says: "the pure concept is the absolutely infinite" (*WL GW* 12.33). Still in the *Science of Logic*, Hegel states that reason knows God, freedom, right and duty because the infinite in them is not the empty abstraction from the finite (cf. *WL GW* 12.91).

The centrality of the concept of the true infinite is not limited to the *Logic* but extends to the *Phenomenology* as well. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit* Hegel refers to the simple infinity of the concept as the "simple essence of life, the soul of the world, the universal bloodstream" (*PhG* p. 147–8).⁹ Arguably the most important transition in the *Phenomenology*, the move from consciousness to self-consciousness, occurs when consciousness grasps the holistic inter-

⁸ This does not require that in order to provide an interpretation of a particular concept or theme in Hegel, for example, the concept of recognition in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, one needs to start from an account of true infinity. However, it does require that the account provided of the particular concept in question be compatible with at least one interpretation of the concept of infinity that is true to the original meaning attributed to it by Hegel.

⁹ Citations refer to the Pinkard translation (Works Cited: Hegel 2008).

dependency between itself and its object, at the end of the section on the understanding (*PhG* p. 153). This is a turning point for consciousness, as after this point it gives up the perspective of consciousness that is defined by its understanding of its object and of itself as two finitudes, existing independently and related to each other in an external manner, and evolves into the perspective of self-consciousness that is defined by the necessity to account for the holistic interdependency between itself and its object. In my reading, the concept of the true infinite is the concept of this special form of holistic interdependency. Not only the transition from consciousness to self-consciousness but also the important transition from self-consciousness to reason are marked by the progressive development and realization of this concept: “When infinity is finally an object for consciousness, and consciousness is aware of it as what it is, then consciousness is self-consciousness” (*PhG* p. 153).

In my reading, the infinite is the operative concept in all these statements. They can be made intelligible only by making explicit the concept of the true infinite contained in them. This concept is not a mere hangover from pre-critical metaphysics. What Hegel calls “the rigid dogmatism of the metaphysics of the understanding” (*Enc* § 45 A) that defines pre-critical metaphysics lacks this self-reflective and self-determining notion, as well as the speculative method which is the full self-development of this concept. The true infinite is the conceptual core of the speculative element in Hegel’s philosophy and is as such the primary conceptual innovation that allows Hegel to make the speculative turn from Kant’s critical philosophy.

My philosophical claim is the philosophical correlate of my interpretative proposal. I claim neither that Hegel is doing metaphysics in the pre-critical sense, nor that he is a non-metaphysical thinker. His project is genuinely post-Kantian, and he believes his Logic to be a completion of Kant’s project and in fact the true critique of pure reason: “The objective logic is the true critique of thought-determinations not according to the abstract form of the *a priori* as contrasted with the *a posteriori*, but in themselves according to their particular content” (*WL GW* 21.49).

The crux of the matter lies in getting to the bottom of what is involved in Hegel’s speculative turn and his break with Kant, which is at least as important as his continuity with him. The speculative turn is purposefully introduced by Hegel to address some important deficiencies that he believes to be inherent in Kant’s theoretical philosophy, in order to ground a post-critical metaphysics. It is these deficiencies that Hegel calls attention to when he writes:

It must be recognized that to have established the finitude of the cognition that is based merely on experience and belongs to the understanding, and to have termed its content

“appearance,” was a very important result of the Kantian philosophy. But we ought not to stop at this negative result, or to reduce the unconditioned character of reason to the merely abstract identity that excludes distinction. Since, upon this view, reason is regarded as simply going beyond the finite and conditioned character of the understanding, it is thereby itself degraded into something finite and conditioned, for the genuine infinite is not merely a realm beyond the finite: on the contrary, it contains the finite sublated within itself. (*Enc* § 45 A)

Here Hegel criticizes Kant for taking theoretical reason merely as a bad infinite and failing to recognize its true infinity. In my reading, this point is Hegel's fundamental criticism of Kant's theoretical philosophy. A number of other well-known and important criticisms are the following: i) Kant fails to investigate thought-determinations in and for themselves; ii) Kant also fails to recognize that the critique of thought-determinations and their activity must be included within the process of cognition so that they may determine their own limits and show their own defects; iii) he also falls short of recognizing that our thoughts are not cut off from the thing-in-itself by an impassible gulf, but that the true objectivity of thinking consists instead in the fact that logical categories are not merely our thoughts, but at the same time also the in-itself of things and of whatever else is objective; iv) Kant neglects to acknowledge that categories are not empty, as stipulated by his famous dictum: “thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind” (*KrV* A51/B75) but have a content in virtue of being determinate; v) finally, Kant also misrecognizes the true significance of the antinomies of reason by assessing them merely as consequences of theoretical reason's overstepping its limit, instead of seeing in them what Hegel calls the dialectical moment of logical thinking. By my lights, all of these criticisms are either closely related to and, in some cases, directly derive from Hegel's more fundamental point on Kant's failure to grasp the true infinity of theoretical reason.

Hegel believes that he is able to overcome these deficiencies by taking advantage of the very specific conceptual resources available to him in virtue of his speculative turn. These conceptual resources consist first and foremost of the concept of true infinity and the higher speculative or infinite concepts such as the Concept, the Idea, reason and spirit, which are developed from this concept of the true infinite. Eventually, all traditional categories of western philosophy receive new light through Hegel's interpretation of them from the standpoint of this new concept of infinity, or the speculative standpoint.

Hegel's Concept of True Infinity

I do not have here the necessary space to articulate a full-blown account of Hegel's concept of the true infinite. However, to be able to argue for my case, I provide an overview of what I understand Hegel's concept of the true infinite and its fundamental conceptual determinations to entail.

The idea of infinity is closely related to the idea that all finite determinations are negatively self-related or, to use Hegel's terminology, "self-sublating": "Finite things *are*, but in their reference to themselves they refer to themselves *negatively*—in this very self-reference they propel themselves beyond themselves, beyond their being" (WL GW 21.116). This view is closely related to Hegel's important commitment to, and innovative interpretation of, the medieval principle *omnis determinatio est negatio*, which he attributes to Spinoza (cf. WL GW 21.101). Hegel derives this from the insight that pure being lacks all determination, thus becomes determinate being, and consequently something, only by integrating negation within itself. This is established in the Logic by passing through the stages of becoming and determinate being. Something is determinate being by excluding its other from itself. This negative relation with the other defines the distinction of something from its other and is essential to the former. Something is what it is only through its distinction from the other. This negation that defines the distinction of something from its other is the first negation that belongs to the constitution of something. Hegel calls this first negation that defines the thing and its negative relation to its other, "abstract negation" (WL GW 21.96).

This exclusion of the other from itself by the something is at the same time the inclusion of its own limit. Its limit does not fall outside it but belongs to its very own determination. Without its limit, it would not be a determinate being but indeterminate pure being. As Houlgate points out, something is finite not because it falls short of the infinite but because it includes its limit within itself (cf. Houlgate 2006, p. 382). This expresses the important Hegelian principle that finitude is not a being limited in general but the inclusion of being's own limit or of its non-being within itself. This inclusion of its own non-being within itself is the negative self-relatedness of everything finite, its lack of self-sufficiency. It must be noted that this is not a negative relation merely between our concepts and being; it therefore cannot be resolved by revising our concepts, as Brandom for example seems to suggest (see Brandom 2002, pp. 178–208). For Hegel, being negatively self-related belongs to the very constitution of finite being. This negative self-relatedness of the finite defines its essential restlessness, instability and lack of self-sufficiency. This idea of the ontological status of the negative self-relatedness of everything finite is often overlooked by semantically ori-

ented interpretations of Hegel such as Brandom's. In all of Hegel's works there are clear and explicit references to the ontological status of this negative self-relation of the finite. It is not possible to provide a coherent interpretation of Hegel without accommodating this key aspect of his thought.

Being negatively self-related, however, does not exhaust the determination of the finite. A finite being is not a mere passing away by reason of its suffering from its own immanent limit. Rather, a finite being has also a positive determination. This self-equality of something is possible only through the sublation of the various distinctions of a specific something from all other things. This self-equal positivity of something makes it more than mere determinateness or existence in general. Something becomes a self-identical existent due to this sublation of distinction. As a self-identical thing that sublates its distinction and connectedness with the other, the something sustains itself. Consequently, according to Hegel, the something involves two different forms of negation within itself. First, through its quality and its distinction it is opposed to an other. This first negation defines its connectedness to the other. Second, it is negatively determined not only toward an other but within itself. Hegel calls the first negation (the one that obtains with respect to an other) abstract negation; the second (the one within itself), absolute negation (cf. *WL GW* 21.96).

The positive determination of something when taken in its distinction from the immanent limit of the finite thing is what the thing should be or ought-to-be. While the ought is what the thing is intrinsically, its immanent norm, the thing is actually never that, because of its restriction. What the finite thing ought-to-be is not an external standard or criterion but is immanent in it. As the necessary togetherness of ought and restriction, the finite thing is this inherent tension or opposition between what it is and what it ought to be. On the one hand, in the ought the finite "*transcends* its restriction" and elevates itself above it. On the other hand, the finite is restricted in relation to the ought. The ought and the restriction are inseparable (cf. *WL GW* 21.120). We should recognize here Hegel's attempt to overcome Kant's famous distinction between *quid juris* and *quid facti* with a non-reductionist strategy (*KrV* A51/B75). For Hegel, a fact carries within it the tension between what it is and what it ought to be as an essential aspect of the determination that makes it that particular and singular fact. With the ought the finite already shows itself to be more than a merely finite or limited being. Hegel states that the transcendence of the finite, and hence the progress to infinity, begins in the ought:

In so far as the finite itself is being elevated to infinity, it is not at all an alien force that does this for it; it is rather its nature to refer itself to itself as restriction (both restriction as such

and as ought) and to transcend this restriction, or rather, in this self-reference, to have negated the restriction and gone above and beyond it. (*WL GW* 21.125)

The ceasing-to-be of a finite thing does not leave behind pure non-being or nothing, but the non-being of that particular something. But this non-being of something is something else. Hence, the ceasing-to-be of a finite thing leads to another finite thing. This process of ceasing-to-be of finite beings and their turning into other finite beings does not come to an end but goes on *ad infinitum*. The idea of infinity comes onto the stage through this endless process of ceasing-to-be of finite things and their passing into other finite things. In this endless ceasing-to-be and passing-into-another, finite things form a process of continuous being. This continuous being is non-finite because unlike finite things, it never ceases to be. Finite things therefore, through their own continuous and endless ceasing-to-be, constitute infinite being—being that never ceases to be. This infinite being is dynamic and self-related being.

At this point, we face one of the turning points of the dialectic of finite and infinite, arguably one of the most important moves in Hegel's *Logic*. This is the dialectic of the bad and true infinite. The infinite of the continuous being is non-finite. To the extent that this infinite differentiates itself from the finite, it posits itself as an other to the finite. This differentiating is a necessary determination of the infinite, as it is genuinely non-finite only by differentiating itself from the finite. Through this differentiating, the infinite is immediately negatively related to the finite; it excludes the finite from itself. However, to be related to an other through an immediate negation is to be limited, and being limited is the determination of the finite. By differentiating itself and excluding the finite from itself, the infinite obtains the determination of a finite being. What is intended is infinite but what is posited is finite: "The infinite has vanished and the other, the finite, has stepped in" (*WL GW* 21.128). At this point, the infinite shows itself limited by the finite and as beyond the finite. This infinite that is a beyond of the finite is Hegel's "bad" or "spurious" infinite. It is bad or spurious because it is not yet the fully-developed concept of the infinite and it should not be mistaken for it. Despite this, it is still a necessary stage that belongs in the development of the true infinite.

As something limited and something with a beyond, this bad infinite involves an immanent reference to its own transcendence of its respective infinite. But this new infinite that will emerge is just another bad infinite. It will suffer from the very dialectic that has just been discussed and will fall back to finitude. Hegel calls this process the progress to infinity. He concludes from this that the true concept of the infinite cannot be one in which the finite is excluded and set

as a beyond. The finite and the bad infinite are inseparable yet must be distinguished within their very inseparability.

[T]he unity of the finite and the infinite is not an external bringing together of them, nor an incongruous combination that goes against their nature, one in which inherently separate and opposed terms that exist independently and are consequently incompatible, would be knotted together. Rather, each is itself this unity, and this only as a *sublating* of itself in which neither would have an advantage over the other in in-itselfness and affirmative existence. (WL GW 21.133)

Both the finite and the infinite include the other within themselves. The infinite is nothing but the negation of the finite and involves an immanent reference to it through this negative relation. On the other hand, the finite is nothing but negative self-relation to itself and immanent reference to its beyond: the ought that is the bad infinite. The true concept of the infinite should involve not only the negative relation between the finite and the bad infinite, which is the distinguishing of one from the other, but also the necessary reference of each to the other. Each is what it is only through this immanent reference to the other. In Hegel's terms, this immanent reference to the other is their unity in the speculative sense.¹⁰ While the finite and bad infinite are immediately negatively related and exclude one another, the true infinite involves both of them in their unity-in-distinction. In the concept of the genuine infinite, the self-development of being takes for the very first time a double meaning. According to this, the infinite signifies not only one of the two sides of the distinction but also the totality of the process that expresses itself in this doubling. It shows itself as togetherness of both the essential distinction and the inseparability of both sides. True infinity is this mode of existence as self-differentiation or self-determination which doubles itself into moments of a bad infinity and a determinate finite and still maintains its dynamic unity in this self-doubling and self-differentiation. For Hegel, this innovative conceptual category is constitutive of complex formations such as self, life, nature and spirit. These can only be comprehended as constituted by this infinity.

[T]he determinate unity of the *finite* and the *infinite*, the distinguishing of these two is also present in it. And this distinguishing is not one that would also let them go loose, each subsisting separately, but it rather leaves them in the unity as *idealized*. This *unity* of the infin-

10 The speculative sense of unity needs to be carefully distinguished from unity in the general sense. In the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* (VRel, Works Cited: Hegel 2006) Hegel states that "everything turns around defining what unity is" (p. 128). The Logic taken in its entirety can be read as Hegel's articulation of the concept of unity in the speculative sense.

ite and the finite, and the *distinguishing* of them, are inseparable, in the same way as the finite and the infinite. (WL GW 21.142)

Hegel states that “the infinite does not stand *above* the finite as something ready-made by itself, as if the finite stood fixed *outside* or *below* it” (WL GW 21.125). He adds that the true infinite “is also *existence* or ‘*thereness*,’ for ...[i]t is, and is *there*, present, before us” (WL GW 21.136). This of course is not a *thereness* that excludes us and our relating to it as to a beyond. These are themselves moments of the true infinite process. Otherwise, this would amount to falling back onto bad infinity: “*There* is not an infinite which is infinite *beforehand*, and only *afterwards* does it find it necessary to become finite, to go forth into *finitude*; the infinite is rather for itself just as much finite as infinite” (WL GW 21.141).

Hegel maintains that this elevation of the finite to the infinite is not something we do as subjective reason. Rather, the finite shows itself to be the infinite through its own nature (cf. WL GW 21.125). This is especially important to note, as I believe it precludes any non-ontological or Kantian reading of Hegel’s system as referring to the subjective conditions of the intelligibility of our objects.

Hegel’s concept of the true infinite is a major innovation in the conceptual resources of ontology and epistemology. It is not only a specific way of conceptualizing the endless flux of finite things in space and time, but incorporates the conceptual resources for explaining the self-development or self-determination of being into more complex ontological structures such as self-consciousness, life, reason and spirit.

One has to admit that there is a considerable amount of logical or ontological steps through which being needs to pass for its self-development into these highly complex formations. My point, however, is that through the concept of true infinity Hegel has articulated the self-developing or self-determining form that belongs to the very ontological structure of being. This concept of the true infinite is the conceptual core of Hegel’s claims for the immanent self-determining and self-developmental philosophical method as well as the self-determining and self-developmental form that he attributes to the Concept. The self-determination of thought-determinations which distinguishes Hegel’s speculative thought in a fundamental way from both pre-critical metaphysics and Kant’s critical philosophy is based on this concept of the true infinite:

Here we have ... the nature of speculative thought displayed in its determining feature: it consists solely in grasping the opposed moments in their unity. Inasmuch as each moment shows, as a matter of fact, that it has its opposite in it, and that in this opposite it rejoins itself, the affirmative truth is this internally self-moving unity, the grasping together of both thoughts, their infinity – the reference to oneself which is not immediate but infinite. (WL GW 21.139)

For Hegel, this transition of the finite into the true infinite through its own immanent dialectic is so fundamental that this lack of self-subsistence of the finite, its being and showing itself as a moment of the infinite, well-nigh defines idealism (cf. *WL GW* 21.142). The idealism of philosophy consists in nothing but the recognition of this. On this basis and only on this basis does Hegel claim that every philosophy worthy of the name is essentially an idealism (cf. *WL GW* 21.142). This means that every philosophy is a particular definition of the infinite, and the finite must be cognized as a moment of it. Essence, Concept, Idea, and Spirit correspond to different stages of the carrying out of this principle. The Concept is what is truly and absolutely infinite and the culmination of the self-development of being.

In my view, this concept of the true infinite marks the fundamental distinction of Hegel's speculative philosophy from Kant's transcendental logic. It also rules out any non-metaphysical interpretation of Hegel that takes thought as finite and excludes being from it. The finite thought that is opposed to being should be grasped as the bad infinite, i.e., grasped in its inseparability with being within the infinity of thought. This idea of infinite thought is not something subjective or transcendental in the Kantian sense. Rather, it gives us the meaning of what is there. This, however, is not a return to pre-critical metaphysics because the unity of finite thought with being is not immediately assumed: instead, their mutual distinction and inseparability are grasped as different moments of a self-determining true infinite unity.

Grasping the central role of the concept of the true infinite in Hegel's system has important implications in terms of potential strategies to be pursued when reading Hegel critically. It has often been said or understood that embracing Hegel's philosophy is a wholesale affair. One has to take it or leave it in its entirety. Yet if one accepts the centrality of Hegel's concept of true infinite, this need not be so. This gives us at least two alternative strategies for reading Hegel critically. One may start with a critical reading of Hegel's concept of the true infinite and then, by modifying certain aspects of it and by the recursive application of this modified concept, end up with a philosophical position that is considerably different than Hegel's. This is not necessarily an interpretation but a modification of Hegel in dialogue with his core philosophical commitments. Alternatively, one may accept Hegel's concept of the true infinite and try to see whether the remaining parts of Hegel's system necessarily follow from it. It is, at least in principle, possible that the rest of Hegel's system is underdetermined by the concept of the true infinite, in which case one may conceive of constructing other self-developmental philosophical positions or systems based on the concept of the true infinite but with different collateral commitments. These alternative philosophical positions should be rightfully called speculative in the Hegelian sense because

they are based on his concept of the true infinite, which, while being the determining feature of the speculative, may look in its actual content considerably different from Hegel's philosophical system.

The True Infinite and Non-Metaphysical Interpretations

In my view, non-metaphysical interpreters have not been able so far to do justice to the concept of the true infinite and its centrality in Hegel's system. To name two eminent representatives among the non-metaphysical interpretations of Hegel, I think this criticism applies to Pippin's non-metaphysical reading of Hegel as a post-Kantian philosopher articulating the conditions of the intelligibility of our objects, as well as to Brandom's non-metaphysical Hegel as a post-Kantian pragmatist and social constructivist. In my view, both interpretations are incompatible with Hegel's concept of the true infinite in the sense discussed above. It is not possible to do full justice to Brandom's and Pippin's positions here, but I can highlight some important challenges posed to their positions by the concept of the true infinite.

From the start, there is a fundamental problem in Pippin's interpretation of Hegel's Logic as providing the conditions of intelligibility of our objects. Such an interpretation would fall back into bad infinity by not grasping thought and being as moments of a single self-related and self-differentiating infinite process. To the extent that thought and being are taken as self-subsistent and mutually independent, they are taken as bad infinities. Overcoming this bad infinity is the primary motive of Hegel's speculative turn and his project for overcoming Kantian dualisms. In my view, missing this point means missing a good deal about what is involved in Hegel's speculative turn. When Pippin criticizes Hegel for conflating the logical mode of speech with the material mode of speech (Pippin 1989, p. 187), he presupposes the Kantian idea of a beyond, and therefore bad infinity re-emerges. In this mode of distinction between thought and being and between the corresponding logical and material modes of speech, the idea of two self-subsistent bad infinities is preserved. The true infinity of reason and, together with it, Hegel's primary philosophical insight are lost, and Hegel's position is transformed into a socialized and historicized Kantianism.

Both Pippin and Brandom have produced very influential interpretations of Hegel's concept of self-consciousness. Their positions on this concept play a central role in their overall Hegel interpretations. In both cases, the oversight of the essential relationship between the concepts of the true infinite and self-

consciousness is striking. Pippin reads Hegel's notion of self-consciousness as a practical achievement that necessarily involves a relation to other people, a social one. This reading neglects the ontological deep structure of this social and practical achievement. Pippin interprets Hegel's remark: "consciousness is for itself its concept, and as a result it immediately goes beyond the restriction, and, since this restriction belongs to itself, it goes beyond itself too" (*PhG* p. 77) as grounding an autonomy thesis which suggests norms governing what we think and do. These norms can be said to govern thought and action only insofar as subjects accept such constraints and sustain allegiance to them. The Kantian principle that knowers and intentional doers are not explicable as beings merely subject to laws of nature but require an appeal to their representation of and self-subjection to laws is at the center of Pippin's interpretation (see Pippin 2011, p. 23). The intimate relationship between Hegel's concepts of self-consciousness and of the true infinite gets no mention in this reading.

Brandom follows a similar pragmatist and social constructivist line of interpretation. He claims that Hegel understands normative status, and therefore all conceptual commitments, as social achievements based on reciprocal recognition. This is expressed in the slogan "For Hegel, all transcendental constitution is social institution" (Brandom 2002, p. 216). According to Brandom, by placing this social concept of reciprocal recognition at the very heart of normative bindingness Hegel reconciles Kant's autonomy model of normative bindingness, i.e., the idea that subjects have authority over what they are responsible for or committed to, with the requirement that the normative content to which one binds oneself should have relative independence from the attitudes of the subject (Brandom 2009, p. 64). Thanks to this concept of reciprocal recognition, the only role left for transcendental constitution in establishing the relative independence and determinateness of normative content, and therefore of concepts, becomes redundant. We can then claim that all transcendental constitution is social institution, and instead of transcendental arguments all we need is an analysis of incompatibility and consequence relations that are implicitly or explicitly instituted by social recognitive practices. If this reading were accurate, far from being a metaphysical thinker Hegel would be putting the last nail on the coffin of traditional metaphysics by eliminating its last residue in Kant's transcendental idealism and its reference—albeit a negative reference—to *noumena*.

The logical or ontological core of Hegel's concept of self-consciousness and its intimate relation with the concept of the true infinite does not feature in either position. On the other hand, it must be noted that the emergence of self-consciousness in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is marked by the emergence of infinity as an object of consciousness: "When infinity is finally an object for consciousness, and consciousness is aware of it as what it is, then consciousness is self-

consciousness” (*PhG* p. 163). Up to this very important turning point in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, consciousness takes its object and itself as an individual or a “this” at the level of sense-certainty, as a sensuous universal at the level of perception, and as an unconditioned universal at the level of understanding. All of these categories, i.e. individual, sensuous universal, and unconditioned universal, prove to be failing attempts to provide coherent accounts of the constitution of the object and of the “I”. Only at the end of the understanding chapter, when consciousness grasps the holistic dependency between itself and its object, consciousness becomes self-consciousness. After this point, the object and the “I” can no longer be accounted for as two finitudes, existing independently and related to each other in an external manner. They must now be cognized by a new category that is suitable to their mutual dependence and unity in their difference. This must be a category that involves the unity of being in-itself with being-for-another. This category is infinity. After this point, consciousness needs to cognize its object and itself as constituted by this category and must adjust all of its implicit and explicit commitments that prove incompatible with this infinity. Consequently, the function of recognition should be understood in its specific role as actualizing this infinity of self-consciousness. Self-consciousness becomes infinite only if it sublates otherness and remains in unity with itself in this otherness. This is what self-consciousness is set to achieve in recognition:

The concept of its unity in its doubling, of infinity realizing itself in self-consciousness, is that of a multi-sided and multi-meaning intertwining, such that, on one hand, the moments within this intertwining must be strictly kept apart from each other, and on the other hand, they must also be taken and cognized at the same time as not distinguished, that is, they must be always taken and cognized in their opposed meanings. This twofold sense of what is distinguished lies in the essence of self-consciousness, which is to be infinitely or immediately the opposite of the determinateness in which it is posited. The elaboration of the concept of this spiritual unity in its doubling presents us with the movement of recognition. (*PhG* p. 164)

It is the inadequacy of self-consciousness to reflect the true form of infinity as desire, master and slave, stoicism, and skepticism, which is the ground of the unrest of self-consciousness. It is the urge to overcome this inadequacy that drives the development of higher forms from the lower forms of self-consciousness, eventually leading to the emergence of reason. Recognition is the specific phenomenological process through which the infinity of self-consciousness is actualized in a social context by sublating or returning from otherness to itself, which is the defining feature of true infinity. In the following passage, Hegel ex-

plains why self-consciousness fails to sublate otherness in desire and therefore cannot find satisfaction in it:

Desire and the certainty of itself achieved in its satisfaction are conditioned by the object, for the certainty exists by way of the act of sublating of this other. For this act of sublating even to be, there must be this other. Self-consciousness is thus unable by way of its negative relation to the object to sublate it, and for that reason it once again to an even greater degree re-engenders the object as well as the desire. (*PhG* p. 162)

This realization of the self-sufficiency of the object, which prevents the self-consciousness of desire to sublate its other, marks the transition to recognition as a strategy to realize the infinity of self-consciousness. Here self-consciousness understands that it can be infinite, and therefore a real self-consciousness, only if the object conforms to it and effects this negation in it: “On account of the self-sufficiency of the object, it thus can only achieve satisfaction if this object itself effects the negation in it [the object]; and the object must in itself effect this negation of itself” (*PhG* p. 166). This effecting of the negation in the object by the object is a critical dimension of reciprocal recognition and is intimately linked with Hegel's concept of infinity. The self-negation of the other is an essential moment because it is only through the self-negation of the finite that infinity can be actualized. It is not sufficient for self-consciousness to merely negate its other; it is necessary that the other be self-negating. As discussed above, this negative self-relatedness of the finite is essential to the transition to infinity. Only through this self-negating can self-consciousness and its other be grasped as moments of the same infinite process, and self-consciousness can elevate itself from a finite particular to infinity. At this stage in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, this self-negation can take place only in and by another self-consciousness—hence the concept of recognition.

The deep structure of everything that is taking place here is defined by the category of the true infinite and the various attempts to realize it. It follows precisely Hegel's analysis of infinity in the *Science of Logic*. Consequently, reciprocal recognition cannot institute concepts, as suggested by Brandom. It is already constituted by the ontology of the true infinite or, one may also say, by the ontology of the Concept, which is for Hegel the absolutely infinite, or infinite form.

In this fashion have I tried to portray *consciousness* in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Consciousness is spirit as concrete, self-aware knowledge – to be sure, a knowledge bound to externality, but the progression of this subject matter, like the development of all natural and spiritual life, rests exclusively on the nature of the *pure essentialities* that constitute the content of the logic. (*WL GW* 21.8)

To say that self-conscious selves are constituted by a social recognition process does not amount to saying that this process does not have an ontological structure. It amounts to saying that this process has a social ontology. In my view, this ontology is the infinite ontology of the concept that Hegel explains in detail in the *Science of Logic*. This establishes the ontological primacy of the logical or the rational to the social. It is the reason why Hegel calls “the logical” the absolute as it is in its pure essence (cf. *WL GW* 12.237).

In my view, Brandom’s and Pippin’s oversights are not arbitrary but consistent with the widespread tendency to overlook the important connections between Hegel’s *Science of Logic* and the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, as well as consistent with reading the latter as a work almost independent of Hegel’s works on logic and the *Realphilosophie*. The resulting interpretation misses Hegel’s core idea: the true infinite or the speculative. This innovative and complex notion represents the core of Hegel’s break from Kant and his original contribution to the key topics I have discussed: the nature of normativity, freedom, nature, and self-consciousness. I take Hegel at his word when he says, first, that the true infinite is the basic concept of philosophy (*Enc* § 95R), not of logic alone but of philosophy in general, and second, that the true infinite gives us the speculative in its determining feature. Missing this point is missing something essential about what defines Hegel’s philosophy and what differentiates it from some post-Kantian historicism.

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A Deflationary Approach to Hegel's Metaphysics

Introduction

Hegel's system, as outlined in the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, is nothing but metaphysics—metaphysics, however, in a Hegelian sense. Hegel has been widely perceived as a dogmatic metaphysician who attempted to revive and reestablish the edifice of traditional metaphysics that had allegedly been demolished by Kant. This picture is misleading, if not plainly wrong. Hegel's metaphysics is not traditional metaphysics, but what he refers to as speculative philosophy (cf. *PhG* p. 22/*TWA* 3:39 and cf. *WL GW* 21.7).¹ Speculation is Hegel's approach to philosophical thinking, which is not to deal with the objective world directly, but to “watch” (*zusehen*) the movement of the Concept upon which any thought about the world has to rely (cf. Kulenkampff 1970, p. 16; Stekeler-Weithofer 1992, p. 171–2).

As “a thinking of thinking” (*Enc* § 19R),² Hegel's speculative philosophy develops itself as a second-order theory that explores the philosophical concepts necessary for traditional first-order metaphysics. This meta-theoretical approach to meta-physics is reflected in Hegel's repeated emphasis on the identity of logic and metaphysics, which, however, has often been mistaken as a thesis on the “metaphysicalization” of logic by inflation of logical categories with metaphysical content. But Hegel's revolution consists rather in reading the identity the other way round, that is, by thoroughly deflating metaphysics into logic and semantics. The possibility of reading Hegel's metaphysics merely as logic has surprisingly escaped the mind of many Hegelians, although it is a much more reasonable and natural way of understanding Hegel's identification of metaphysics with logic. After all, the foundational work of Hegel's metaphysics is titled the *Science of Logic* instead of the *Science of Metaphysics*! Hegel's metaphysics would therefore better be called logico-metaphysics, and it turns out that the person who understood Hegel's position best was his greatest philosophical

¹ Quotations of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* are from the Miller translation (Works Cited: Hegel 1977b); quotations from the *Science of Logic* are from the Di Giovanni translation (Works Cited: Hegel 2010b).

² Quotations from the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences, Part I: Science of Logic* are from the Brinkmann/Dahlstrom translation (Works Cited: Hegel 2010a).

rival, Schelling. Schelling characterized Hegel's project as "negative philosophy," which focuses on "the merely *logical nature* of philosophy" (Schelling 1994, p. 134). While Schelling considered this focus to be the decisive weakness of Hegel's philosophy, this paper sees it as an important strength, since Hegel's negative philosophy or deflationary metaphysics makes a genuinely open and dynamic system possible.

The Systematicity of Philosophy

Few philosophers have placed as much stress on the systematicity of philosophy as Hegel did. Hegel considered philosophy to be not just a body of knowledge, but necessarily a systematic whole. The demand for systematicity is, of course, not new; it has been an element of philosophy for a long time, particularly in the modern era, when epistemological concerns became dominant. However, no one before had put forward such a radical principle of systematicity (Löwith 1973, p. 3). For Hegel, the necessary systematicity is the logical consequence of a more fundamental idea: "The true is the whole" (*PhG* p. 11/*TWA* 3:24). Nothing less than the whole, the systematic whole, can lay claim to truth. The whole is prior to its parts. The latter can lay claim only to a derivative, weakened sense of truth, not the emphatic one. Traditionally, it has been taken for granted that propositions or judgments represent the elementary unit of truth. Hegel rejected this common presupposition, claiming that "judgment is one-sided on account of its form and to that extent false" (*Enc.* § 31R). Hegel did not deny that individual judgments can be correct (*richtig*) if they describe things in the right way, but he considered them to be unworthy of the nobler predicate of truth.

Against the backdrop of Hegel's holism, the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of his philosophy appears to be particularly ironic. Hegel's philosophy became influential, not primarily through the core of his metaphysical system, but first through his penetrating analysis of different political, historical, and cultural topics, published in the *Philosophy of Right* and the various Lectures. Although the *Philosophy of Right* is only a detailed compendium for the reference of students in lectures and the reliability of the Lectures is questionable, for a long time these works largely shaped the image of Hegel. Even the *Phenomenology of Spirit* did not start to attract the attention of a wider audience until much later. The very core of Hegel's system, the *Science of Logic*, has rarely been studied seriously except by hardcore Hegelians, although it occupies as important a role in Hegel's philosophy as the *Critique of Pure Reason* does in Kant's.

The fact that Hegel imposes such a strict requirement of systematicity on philosophy has, in effect, scared people away from his system. Hegel's claim

to absolute knowledge has been understood to imply a closed and finished system that has no room for change and is thus unable to cope with the progress of human knowledge as well as with the tremendous developments in the post-Hegelian world. Attention has instead been drawn to the looser parts in the Philosophy of Spirit. This has established itself as the popular approach to philosophizing on Hegel without having to struggle with his metaphysical system. This strategy was best formulated by B. Croce in his distinction between what is living and what is dead in Hegel's philosophy (Croce 1985). Croce credited various parts of Hegel's Philosophy of Spirit with being vital and significant, but considered not only Hegel's Philosophy of Nature but even the *Science of Logic* to be dead. However, Croce's approach would be akin to philosophizing on Kant merely through his minor works, thereby discarding the whole *Critique of Pure Reason*. Looking back on Hegel after two hundred years, there is no doubt that Hegel got many things wrong. It would have been a huge blow to human reason if this were not the case. However, sacrificing Hegel's philosophical foundation will make us miss what is really living in his philosophy, because Hegel's system is, in its essence, a truly open and dynamic enterprise that can come to terms with the development of history. Hegel's metaphysics is far from dead, but is a living project that is still of interest to the contemporary world.³ Yet, we have to understand Hegel's metaphysics in the right way, recognizing it as a second-order theory of logical categories that does not describe the objective world directly, but rather determines the fundamental concepts that are necessary for our understanding of the world as well as our orientation in it.

The Identity of Logic and Metaphysics

"*Logic*," according to Hegel, "coincides with *metaphysics*, i.e. the science of *things* captured in *thoughts* that have counted as expressing the *essentialities of things*" (*Enc* § 24). Metaphysics is the philosophical discipline that deals with the fundamental nature and structure of reality, having been recognized as the First Philosophy since Aristotle (*Met.* 4.1.1003a21–2). In modern times, however, the priority of *metaphysica generalis* or ontology has been repeatedly called into question. While Descartes prioritized epistemological over ontological inquiries, Kant explicitly insisted that "the proud name of an ontology ... must give way to the modest one of a mere analytic of the pure understanding"

³ I have defended the openness of Hegel's system elsewhere in greater detail (Lau 2007).

(*KrV* A247/B303).⁴ Since traditional metaphysics failed to reflect on the conditions and limits of cognition, Kant attempted to determine the necessary forms of all objective cognition by engaging in a critical examination of the faculty of cognition. Kant may have demolished much of traditional metaphysics, but he never intended to get rid of metaphysics. On the contrary, Kant strove to secure the possibility of metaphysics as a science by rebuilding the traditional enterprise on a solid foundation through his first Critique.

With his speculative philosophy, Hegel took the further step of completing the Kantian reform of metaphysics, transforming metaphysics, and ontology in particular, through his Logic.

The objective logic thus takes the place rather of the former *metaphysics* which was supposed to be the scientific edifice of the world as constructed by *thoughts* alone. – If we look at the final shape in the elaboration of this science, then it is *ontology* which objective logic most directly replaces in the first instance, that is, that part of metaphysics intended to investigate the nature of *ens* in general ... (*WL GW* 21.48)

Yet, Hegel was highly critical of a number of Kant's presuppositions. To Hegel, Kant's Analytic implied an untenable opposition of subject and object, leading to the incoherent concept of thing-in-itself. Kant conceded that the realm of possible cognition is nothing but appearances and not things in themselves, because only objects whose reality depends on our faculty of cognition are subject to our cognitive forms. Things in themselves are thus in principle held to be incognizable, and their incognizability turns out to be the price that Kant's project has to pay. Hegel, however, believed that such a price is not only unworthy but also completely unnecessary. Kant thought that there was a limit beyond which human reason could have no legitimate use, without realizing that drawing such a limit already presupposes knowledge of the two sides of it. This is Hegel's criticism of Kant that H.-G. Gadamer characterized as the "dialectic of limit" (Gadamer 1990, p. 348–9). In claiming that things in themselves are not subject to the forms of our cognition and are never cognizable, Kant has tacitly made a claim of knowledge concerning them.

Hegel rejected Kant's thing-in-itself as a residue of traditional metaphysics. The thing in itself is supposed to take the role of an external, thought-independent constraint on thought, but Hegel pointed out that it cannot stand for anything that is outside or beyond the limit of thought. On the contrary, the thing-in-itself is rather "the thought product of pure abstraction" (*WL GW*

⁴ Quotations from the *Critique of Pure Reason* are from the Guyer/Wood translation (Works Cited: Kant 1998).

21.14), i. e., a mental construction par excellence. Hegel gave the following argument against Kant's analysis:

[Saying] that our thoughts have a reference to the essence of things [*auf die Sache*] ... is an empty claim, for the essence of things would then be set up as the rule for our concepts whereas, for us, that essence can only be the concepts that we have of the things. The way in which critical philosophy understands the relation of these *three termini* is that we place *thoughts* as a medium between *us* and the *things*, in the sense that this medium, instead of joining us with such things, would rather cut us off from them. (WL GW 21.14)

The lesson to draw from Hegel's analysis is that there can be, in a sense, nothing outside of our thoughts. We think through concepts. Every individual concept represents a particular set of properties, and taken together they form a holistic system that determines what can be thought. This holistic Concept (capitalized to refer to the singular system of individual concepts) encompasses everything including the thing-in-itself, and constitutes the sole subject matter of the Logic. Hegel concluded at the end of the Logic that "the *Concept* [my capitalization] is *all*, and that its movement is the *universal absolute activity*, the self-determining and self-realizing movement" (WL GW 12.238).

Hegel's concept of the all-encompassing and self-determining Concept may appear radical, but it is certainly not a dead thesis. J. McDowell argued, in the spirit of Hegel against Kant, for "the Unboundedness of the Conceptual" (McDowell 1994, p. 24). McDowell was further developing D. Davidson's criticism of the dualism of conceptual scheme and empirical content, which is an empiricist dualism that originated in Kant (Davidson 2001, p. 189). The dualism gives rise to the problem of what W. Sellars called "the myth of the given," which has caused considerable controversy in analytic philosophy. McDowell responded to the Kantian problem with a Hegelian proposal: "The way to correct what is unsatisfactory in Kant's thinking about the supersensible is rather to embrace the Hegelian image in which the conceptual is unbounded on the outside" (McDowell 1994, p. 83). Without further engaging in the contemporary debate, it can be seen that Hegel's idea offers a plausible way to further advance Kant's critique of traditional metaphysics. Removing the residue of the thing-in-itself means completing the overcoming of the subject-object opposition, which also implies the unification of logic and metaphysics. Hegel's holism of the Concept does not mean that there is nothing out there or that everything is a mere construction of our thoughts. Hegel certainly accepted that there is an external reality of which philosophy strives to acquire objective knowledge, but the point is that there is no external reality that would escape the regime of the Concept.

The aim of metaphysics is to determine what there is and how things really are, but these questions can never be answered without first clarifying what the concepts of existence, reality, and things mean and in what way the truth can be known by means of them. Traditional metaphysics operated, according to Hegel, on the basis of “*figurative representation* [*Vorstellung*]” (WL GW 21.49), without realizing the necessity of reflecting on its own conceptual conditions:

However, those determinations were taken to be valid *per se* in their abstraction and capable of being *predicates of the true*. That metaphysics presupposed in general that knowledge of the absolute could take place by attributing predicates to it, and investigated neither the determinations of the understanding with regard to their proper content and value nor even this form of determining the absolute by means of the attribution of predicates. (*Enc* § 28)

Hegel’s Logic takes the place of traditional metaphysics by exploring the concepts employed in it, bringing them into a systematic unity. If traditional metaphysics aims at first-order knowledge of what there is and how things are, Hegel’s logico-metaphysics engages in a kind of second-order meta-cognition, dealing with nothing but the Concept on which all first-order cognition has to rely.⁵ As we know, the term “metaphysics” was coined to refer to those works of Aristotle that were placed after the books on physics. The chronological order of “meta” was later transformed to become an ontological order, with the term “metaphysics” referring to the science of the reality that lies behind or beyond the physical world. Hegel’s identification of metaphysics with logic means a further transformation of the term, turning the idea of “meta” from an ontological to a conceptual order. Hegel’s meta-physics is the science of the Concept, a meta-theoretical system that serves as a basis of every conceivable understanding of reality, and thus truly deserves the characterization of the First Philosophy.

5 R.D. Winfield has made the more radical claim that “systematic logic cannot claim to be a logic of thinking or a logic of reality. Systematic logic presents self-determination *per se* rather than the self-determination of a given content, be it of reality or, more specifically, of mind. Consequently, the categories of systematic logic are not categories of reality any more than of thought. They are instead categories of determinacy without further qualification” (Winfield 2006, p. 17). In a sense, Winfield is right, if thought is taken to be a kind of subjective mental activity. However, if thought is understood in the Hegelian sense as the expression of the Concept, then categories of determinacy are at the same time categories of thought (*Enc* § 24).

The Logic of Logico-Metaphysics

Although on the right track to a transformation of traditional metaphysics, Kant was not consistent enough to complete the transformation, and the first Critique ended up with an inconsistent concept of thing-in-itself. This inconsistency is, according to Hegel, the result of a more fundamental problem in Kant's project. With the first Critique, Kant attempted to determine the nature and limits of objective cognition in advance, in order to avoid making those mistakes by which traditional metaphysics had been trapped. But it is doubtful whether Kant was able to carry out his project to settle metaphysical controversies without making any metaphysical commitments in his investigation. Kant saw in traditional metaphysics a "battlefield [*Kampfplatz*]" of "endless controversies" (*KrV* Aviii) and took upon himself the role of "impartial referee [*unparteiischer Kampfrichter*]" (*KrV* A423/B451), who is not supposed to engage in the battle. Hegel, however, questioned the possibility of such a detached way of dealing with traditional metaphysics:

It is one of the main viewpoints of the *Critical* philosophy that, prior to setting about to acquire knowledge of God, the essence of things, etc., the *faculty of knowing* [*Erkenntnisvermögen*] itself would have to be examined first in order to see whether it is capable of achieving this; ... But the examination of knowing cannot take place other than *by way of knowing* [*erkennend*]. With this so-called instrument, examining it means nothing other than acquiring knowledge of it. But to want to know *before* one knows is as incoherent as the Scholastic's wise resolution to learn to *swim*, *before he ventured into the water*. (*Enc* § 10R)

It appears that Kant overlooked the fact that his critical project, as a kind of meta-cognition, is itself also cognition, and that the critique of metaphysics unavoidably makes metaphysical commitments. Hegel's swim-learner analogy vividly brings out Kant's problem of hoping to end an endless battle without himself being involved in it.

Indeed, the very idea of a critique of *pure* reason already assumes an objective, neutral, and detached standpoint. Kant seemed to be under the illusion that the project of instituting a tribunal of pure reason could be carried out independently of the conditions that govern ordinary cognition. As a result, the operational concepts that frame Kant's first Critique have not been brought under the same critical examination that Kant conducted on metaphysical concepts, which leads to the problem of the thing-in-itself discussed in the previous section. Kant did not recognize the internal inconsistency in the distinction between appearances and things in themselves due to his failure to reflect on the conceptual conditions under which the project of the Critique itself is carried out. Hegel,

by contrast, had a much stronger sense of self-reflectiveness, as he understood that the Logic has to account for the very conditions that make his logico-metaphysics possible. If we compare Kant's theory of categories with Hegel's, it can easily be observed that Hegel's list of categories is much more comprehensive. While Kant focused on a few formal concepts that are crucial for making first-order judgments of the natural world, Hegel included a much larger variety of concepts that represent reality from different perspectives and levels of conceptualization. The concepts of appearance and thing-in-itself are explicitly included in Hegel's Doctrine of Essence as categories that are analyzed thematically.

Hegel did not pretend to be able to overcome metaphysical controversies from an external and objective standpoint, which means that he rejected Kant's ideal of an impartial court of justice. No philosopher can lay claim to a completely neutral and superior standpoint free from all linguistic, cultural, and historical constraints. Instead, Hegel emphasized that "Every philosophy, precisely because it is the exposition of one particular stage of development, belongs to its own time and is caught in that time's restriction. The individual is a son of his people, of his world" (*VGPh TWA* 18, p. 64–5).⁶ If metaphysics is a battlefield, there is no way of settling the battle without getting oneself actively involved in it. Hegel consciously attempted to win fights by going into the battlefield and taking up the challenge. This strategy is particularly obvious in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, in which the philosopher overcomes different standpoints by first internalizing a particular standpoint and then showing its inconsistency from within. In the Logic, Hegel proceeded in a similar way to explore the internal dynamics of every category. What is interesting is the fact that the categories in Hegel's Logic are not, as in Kant's theory, derived from an *a priori* principle. Kant believed that the analytic of pure understanding could be conducted independently of all *a posteriori* factors, focusing solely on the purely *a priori* conditions that are supposed to be valid for all possible cognition. Hegel's Logic can also be viewed as a critique of metaphysical concepts, but it is, as Hegel emphasized, "a critique that considers them, not according to the abstract form of the *a priori* as contrasted with the *a posteriori*, but in themselves according to their particular content" (*WL GW* 21.49).

Although Hegel placed so much emphasis on the systematicity of philosophy, his system has no room for an absolute first principle. Since every principle takes the form of proposition or judgment, but "[t]he form of the sentence, or, more precisely, of the judgment is in any case unsuitable to express that

⁶ Quotes are taken from the Knox/Miller translation (Works Cited: Hegel 1985); page citations of *VGPh* are from *TWA* 18.

which is concrete and speculative – and the true is concrete” (*Enc* § 31R), there cannot be any principle that would be able to express truth. Instead, for Hegel, only the Concept as a singular holistic system would deserve the predicate of truth. There is, however, the subtle problem of how Hegel's Logic comes to the concepts it contains, without appealing to any absolute principle. It turns out that Hegel did not derive the logical categories from a first principle, but adopted them from the history of philosophy.

The Historicity of Logico-Metaphysics

In the *Science of Logic* Hegel analyzed over a hundred of categories in great detail. However, interestingly, when talking about theories of categories, Hegel's name is not usually among the first to come to mind. Instead, it is Aristotle and Kant who are thought to have put forward the most important theories of categories in the history of philosophy. However, neither Aristotle nor Kant devoted more than a dozen pages to discussing their categories, whereas Hegel's voluminous *Science of Logic* deals with nothing but categories. In terms of comprehensiveness, thoroughness, and systematicity, there is no other theory of categories that surpasses Hegel's Logic. Nevertheless, it differs from other theories of categories such as Aristotle's and Kant's not merely in its choice of categories, but more fundamentally in the conception of what categories are.⁷ While Kant attempted to derive his twelve categories from the forms of judgment, which are supposed to represent the basic functions of the understanding, Hegel rejected not only the possibility of deriving categories from any guiding principle, but even the presupposition that there is a fixed and complete list of categories out there, just waiting to be “discovered” by philosophers.

While Kant was utterly confident that there can only be twelve categories, neither more nor fewer (*Prol* p. 116),⁸ Hegel never made a similar claim regarding the completeness of his categories, despite the fact that his philosophy lays a much stronger claim to absolute knowledge. In fact, Hegel made numerous changes in different versions of the Logic, including not only verbal improvements but also structural and substantial revisions of different categories (Burbidge 2008–09; Kolb 2010). In the Preface to the Second Edition, Hegel made an interesting remark. Referring to the legend that Plato rewrote his *Republic*

⁷ In another paper, I offered an in-depth comparison of Hegel's theory of categories with those of Aristotle and Kant (Lau 2008/09).

⁸ Citations of Kant's *Prolegomena* refer to the Hatfield translation (Works Cited: Kant 2002).

seven times, Hegel expressed his wish about “reworking it [the *Science of Logic*] seven and seventy times over” (WL GW 21.20). Expressing such a wish may not sound promising for a work that characterizes itself as “*the exposition of God as he is in his eternal essence before the creation of nature and of a finite spirit*” (WL GW 21.34), but it indicates an openness to continuous revision that is an essential, and indeed superior, feature of Hegel’s system.

The dynamics of Hegel’s system is a logical consequence of Hegel’s concept of the Concept. Since Hegel did not accept any external or allegedly neutral standpoint detached from the historical conditions in which philosophers are situated, there could be no way to establish an absolute first principle or to abstract purely formal structures from concrete content. The categories in Hegel’s Logic were developed dynamically from each other with respect to their specific content, which emerged in the history of philosophy. The content of each category depends on every other, but more fundamentally the meaning of a concept is first determined by its concrete use. In fact, Hegel anticipated the later Wittgensteinian idea of the priority of the use of a concept over its meaning. R. Brandom therefore classified Hegel alongside some contemporary philosophers as Wittgensteinian pragmatists, who subscribe to “‘pragmatism’ in the sense of a particular kind of *use theory of meaning and content*” (Brandom 2002, p.47), while calling the majority of traditional philosophers, such as Kant, intellectualists who insist that “behind every norm implicit in a practice there must be a norm explicit in a rule” (Brandom 2002, p. 393; cf. Brandom 2000, p. 22–35). Hegel’s categories were not derived from any *a priori* rule, but rather developed from concrete philosophical debates, which makes it understandable why Hegel would express a wish for the *Science of Logic* to be continuously revised.

It now becomes clear how Hegel came up with the categories contained in his Logic. In a sense, Hegel’s task was just “to consider, or rather, setting aside every reflection, simply to take up, *what is there before us*” (WL GW 21.55). The Concept had already been operating in the history of philosophy. Hegel had only to watch how it unfolded. Yet, Hegel’s Logic is not just a factual description of what had emerged in the history of philosophy, although Hegel did suggest that “the succession of philosophical systems in history is the same as their succession in the logical derivation of the categories of the Idea” (VGPh TWA 18:49). In Hegel’s Logic, the task is to confront the history of each category and enhance the internal dynamics or “contradictions” inherent in it. The aim is to make transparent what has been concealed in the concepts. The dialectical movement of categories is a re-conceptualization of their own historical development (Düsing 1983, p. 16–39). In Hegel’s words, “the same development of thinking that is portrayed in the history of philosophy is also portrayed in philosophy itself, only freed from its historical externality, *purely in*

the element of thinking." (Enc § 14) If Kant's project is called the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Hegel's *Science of Logic* is a critique of *historical* reason, because it involves critically reviewing and reconstructing the development of the Concept in the history of philosophy. R. Bubner summarized Hegel's project as follows:

The history of philosophy is implicitly present in the *Logic* rather in the sense that the latter takes up all the relevant concepts that previous metaphysics has produced and simultaneously subjects them to conceptual reconstruction...The *Logic* brings in no special concepts to add to the already existing conceptual stock of philosophy as if to claim that its own were the only true and definitive ones, and superior to all other competing concepts. ... His *Logic* is not designed to perform this role, but rather to provide an intrinsically coherent and interconnected articulation of the totality of all previously generated concepts. Hegel's *Logic* thus *methodologically reinterprets the entire history of metaphysics.*" (Bubner 2003, p. 65–6)

Not only does the project deal with the history of thoughts, but the project itself has its historical conditions. Without appealing to an external and detached standpoint as Kant did, Hegel's logical reconstruction of the history of metaphysics unavoidably depends on the historical conditions under which the reconstruction itself was carried out. If Hegel were to write the *Logic* again today, he would certainly produce quite a different work, as tremendous progress has been made in the field of philosophy in the last two hundred years. He might replace some old concepts with new ones or attribute different meanings to those concepts. It is in this sense that philosophy "*is its own time comprehended in thoughts*" (RPh TWA 7:26).⁹

The Metaphysics of *Realphilosophie*

If the *Logic* takes the place of traditional ontology, then Hegel's *Realphilosophie* offers a comprehensive system of *metaphysica specialis*, which not only takes the place of rational cosmology (Nature) and psychology (Subjective Spirit), but is also the basis for the disciplines of ethical-political (Objective Spirit) and cultural ontology (Absolute Spirit). The above deflationary approach applies to the whole system of the Encyclopedia, but it reveals a particularly interesting aspect in the Philosophy of Objective Spirit, which takes the place of practical philosophy. Traditionally, the primary focus of practical philosophy is not on cognition, but on normative principles governing how we *ought* to act. However, Hegel called the traditional conception into question in the following statement on the purpose of his *Philosophy of Right*:

⁹ Quotations of RPh are taken from the Nisbet translation (Works Cited: Hegel 1991).

This treatise ... shall be nothing other than an attempt to *comprehend and portray the state as an inherently rational entity*. As a philosophical composition, it must distance itself as far as possible from the obligation to construct a *state as it ought to be*; such instruction as it may contain cannot be aimed at instructing the state on how it ought to be, but rather at showing how the state, as the ethical universe, should be recognized. (*RPh TWA* 7:26)

In the *Logic*, Hegel criticized the category of “ought” as representing “a standpoint that remains fixed in finitude and therefore in contradiction” (*WL GW*, 21.123). Kant’s concept of reason, according to Hegel, is characterized by this limited concept of “ought.” While Kant’s theoretical reason posits an ideal unity of empirical knowledge that can never be fully accomplished, his practical reason prescribes moral laws that we finite rational agents ought to, but can never completely, follow. In this sense, Kant’s concept of “ought” indicates that reason has a certain powerlessness, which Hegel refused to accept.

Instead of constructing unrealizable normative ideals, Hegel’s “practical philosophy” is concerned with how reason actualizes itself in the ethical-political world. Hegel seems to have subordinated practical philosophy to theoretical philosophy, leading to the accusation of theocentrism. This accusation can stand, if one bears in mind that by “theory,” Hegel was referring to meta-theoretical speculation in the sense of a second-order “thinking of thinking,” which is also more fundamental than ordinary first-order cognition. A. W. Wood reminded us that “Hegel opposes speculative cognition both to theory and to practice, treating it as a higher unity in which both are contained” (Wood 1990, p. 9). Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right* is not primarily a theory of morality and justice that searches for normative principles for human actions, but operates as a meta-theory to deal with concepts necessary for making normative judgments. This does not mean that there is no room for oughtness or normativity in Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*. Quite the contrary. Normativity is present in the whole enterprise of the *Encyclopedia*, from the *Logic* to the *Philosophy of Absolute Spirit*, because the analysis of categories is tied to normative commitments, implying rules for the correct understanding and application of concepts. If questions concerning how we ought to act are about first-order normativity, then Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right* “distance[s] itself as far as possible from” them. Yet the treatise does focus on how ethical-political concepts “ought” to be understood and applied, which can be called second-order normativity. Hegel himself stated clearly that the treatise cannot aim “at instructing the state on how it ought [*soll*] to be, but rather at showing how the state, as the ethical universe, should [*soll*] be recognized” (*RPh TWA* 7:26). It is not difficult to see that the first *sollen* refers to first-order normativity, and the second to second-order normativity.

This second-order perspective also explains in what sense Hegel was committed to the rationality of the state and to progress in history. For this commitment, Hegel has often been accused of “political conservatism, quietism, and optimism” (Haym 1962, p. 365). However, if Hegel was not at all making a first-order normative claim about how the state ought to be constructed, there is no room for the accusation of conservatism. Instead, Hegel’s thesis is a conceptual one, stating how the state and human history ought to be comprehended, in contrast particularly to the comprehension of natural phenomena. The essential difference between Nature and Spirit, according to Hegel, is that “nature in its determinate being displays necessity and contingency, not freedom” (*Enc* § 247 A),¹⁰ whereas “the formal essence of spirit is...freedom” (*Enc* § 381 A).¹¹ Kant also made a similar distinction, but he considered the realm of freedom to be an unrealizable ideal. Hegel, by contrast, was committed to the sovereignty of reason both in the natural as well as the ethical world. He aimed “to comprehend and portray the state as an inherently rational entity,” but he did not imply that every state is legitimate and good. Hegel’s claim amounts to the conceptual thesis that we have to comprehend the state as a kind of entity to which rational states such as intentions, reasons, and beliefs can be ascribed. The same cannot be done with natural phenomena, which are describable merely in terms of “necessity and contingency.”

The whole Philosophy of Spirit operates on a level at which natural causality is “sublated.” We human beings are certainly also natural creatures, but when we identify ourselves as rational beings in the Philosophy of Subjective Spirit, we no longer describe our behavior merely in terms of causal laws, but rather in terms of attitudes and states that can be regarded as free in the sense of the self-determination of reason. Hegel’s concept of freedom is a further development of Kant’s concept of autonomy or self-determination, but it is a kind of self-determination in which otherness has been overcome. Thus, freedom is formally characterized by Hegel as “being-with-oneself-in-another (cf. *RPh* § 7 A: “... dass es ... in diesem Anderen bei sich selbst sei...dieses ist dann der konkrete Begriff der Freiheit”). The Philosophy of Objective Spirit includes complex entities that consist mainly of human beings, but these entities, such as those that Hegel referred to as *Staat*, *Volksgeist*, or *Weltgeist*, do have their own individuality. They are like humans in the sense that they are only comprehensible by means of rational categories such as intentions, reasons, and beliefs. The

¹⁰ Quotations of the *Philosophy of Nature* are from the Petry translation (Works Cited: Hegel 1970).

¹¹ Quotations of the *Philosophy of Subjective Spirit* are from the Petry translation (Works Cited: Hegel 1977a).

same also extends to Hegel's concept of history, which is not merely a collection of causally connected events, but a process in which reason actualizes itself. In this sense, Hegel's commitment to the rationality of the state and to progress in human history is not a first-order factual description of the human world, but merely a conceptual thesis that these ethical-political entities are only comprehensible under the logic of freedom as something to which rational categories are ascribable.¹²

Concluding Remarks

Hegel's Philosophy of Nature and Spirit presents a comprehensive second-order theory that deals with concepts that are necessary for understanding various natural and human phenomena. These theoretical parts are all closely connected with first-order positive sciences. Although Hegel often gave the impression of looking down on empirical knowledge, he did explicitly acknowledge the dependence of philosophy on the natural sciences. As he confessed in his opening discussion of the Philosophy of Nature, "[i]t is not only that philosophy must accord with the experience nature gives rise to; in its *formation* and in its *development*, philosophic science presupposes and is conditioned by empirical physics" (*Enc* § 246R). Considering how much progress has been made in the natural sciences in the past two hundred years, it is understandable why Hegel's Philosophy of Nature has become the weakest part of his system. As a second-order theory, Hegel's metaphysics is subject to continuous revision and "always comes too late" to reflect on what has already been actualized. "As the *thought* of the world, it appears only at a time when actuality has gone through its formative process and attained its complete state" (*RPh TWA* 7:28). If Hegel had to rework his *Science of Logic* seventy-seven times over, then considering how far the natural and human sciences have advanced, the *Realphilosophie* would have to be extensively rewritten over seven hundred times. This, however, should not be seen as a weakness of Hegel's metaphysics. Rather, it indicates that the core of Hegel's system is a living and open project that always invites us to take a fresh look at the world. Although highly critical of Kant on many points, Hegel's deflationary approach to metaphysics has turned out to be the realization of Kant's idea that the essence of philosophy is nothing but *philosophizing*.

¹² In Lau 2011, I use Davidson's *principle of charity* or *rational accommodation* (Davidson 1997, p. 197; 2004, p. 45–6) to make better sense of Hegel's commitment to the rationality of the state and progress of history.

(cf. *KrV* A837/B865). Hegel's merit consists in demonstrating a particularly self-reflective way of philosophizing, helping us to better understand the concepts that we have been using to understand the world and ourselves.

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Hegel as Metaphysician

Introduction

For well over a hundred years after his death, it was considered a truism that Hegel was offering us some new form of metaphysics. But this interpretation has been challenged in recent years by advocates of the so-called “non-metaphysical” reading of Hegel, which has been highly influential. Notable figures in this camp include K. Hartmann (whose essay “Hegel: A Non-Metaphysical View” was published in 1972), R. Pippin, and T. Pinkard, to name just three.¹ Needless to say, there are differences among the non-metaphysical readers of Hegel, but Robert Pippin seems to speak for all of them when he says that he wishes to interpret and defend Hegel’s theory of the Absolute Idea, and all other matters, “in a way that is not committed to a philosophically problematic theological metaphysics” (Pippin 1989, p. 5). Just what exactly is this metaphysics? Pippin characterizes it as asserting that

Hegel should be understood as...a monist, who believed that finite objects did not “really” exist (only the Absolute Idea exists), that this One was not a “substance” but a “subject,” or mental...and that it was not a static, eternal, Parmenidean One, but developed in time, a development somehow responsible for the shape and direction of human political history, as well as the history of art, religion, and philosophy (all such shapes of Spirit expressing the unfolding of the Absolute Idea). (Pippin 1989, p. 4)

Pippin goes on to characterize the metaphysical Hegel as involving a “self-posing Divine Mind ejecting the moments of Spirit’s history and the determinations of the natural world” (Pippin 1989, p. 5). Later on I will discuss why this characterization of the metaphysical reading of Hegel is a straw man.

¹ For “non-metaphysical readings” of Hegel (of one kind or another) see Englehardt, Tristram and Pinkard 1994; Hartmann 1976; Kolb 1986; Maker 1994; Pinkard 1988, 1994, 1996; Pippin 1989 and 1997; Winfield 1989. The influence of K. R. Dove in propagating the non-metaphysical approach in America has been significant – though it has been primarily through his teaching. Maker and Winfield were both students of Dove. (However, as Winfield’s contribution to the present volume indicates, his position on Hegel and metaphysics has become more nuanced, and can now be described as “non-metaphysical” only in a highly-qualified sense.) For significant critiques of the non-metaphysical approach see Beiser 1995, 1996, 2005; Horstmann 2006; Kreines 2006; and Siep 1991.

However, it should be noted that there tends to be a good deal of ambiguity in non-metaphysical treatments of Hegel. The first such ambiguity concerns the meaning of the term “metaphysics” itself, which non-metaphysical interpreters often do not clearly define. If one considers the statement I have just quoted from Pippin, and statements made by other non-metaphysical readers, what seems to emerge is that they think metaphysics makes claims about transcendent entities; i.e., they identify metaphysics with the “special metaphysics” Kant attacked. Since Hegel isn’t talking about transcendent entities, they conclude that he is therefore not a metaphysician. I will argue, however, that this is a non-sequitur based on a misunderstanding both of the nature of metaphysics and of fundamental features of Hegel’s philosophical system.

Non-metaphysical readers like Hartmann are willing to concede that Hegel is a metaphysician only if metaphysics is construed narrowly as Kant’s “general metaphysics”: i.e., as a categorical ontology, but not an account of anything that actually exists. I will argue that this is mistaken as well, precisely because the distinction between general and special metaphysics is sublated in Hegel’s system.

A further ambiguity in non-metaphysical readings has to do with just what non-metaphysical readers believe they are doing, or say that they are doing. Some clearly and forthrightly claim that they are trying to lay bare Hegel’s own meaning; what he really intended to say. And they assert that he has been misunderstood as a metaphysician. However, other non-metaphysical readers will readily admit that they are not so much interpreting Hegel as developing non-metaphysical, neo-Hegelian philosophies. There is also a third group of non-metaphysical readers, who gracefully move back and forth between these two positions, sometimes framing their work as an interpretation of Hegel’s texts, at other times admitting that they are reconstructing or revising Hegel. The followers of Hartmann are particularly notable for this approach, as F. Beiser pointed out some years ago in a highly-polemical review of a *Festschrift* for Hartmann (see Beiser 1995, p. 1–13).

My focus in this essay will be exclusively on the question of whether Hegel’s version of his own philosophy should be understood to be metaphysical. There is obviously a strong temptation to approach this question by interpreting Hegel’s philosophy in such a way as to frame it as metaphysical or non-metaphysical, according to some particular understanding of metaphysics. I will try to avoid this temptation by looking closely at certain significant passages where Hegel explicitly discusses metaphysics in the context of explaining his own position. In other words, as much as possible I will try to let Hegel speak for himself on this issue. I believe that insufficient attention has been paid to these passages. At least in the present essay, I am less interested in whether one can or

should *develop* Hegel's philosophy in a non-metaphysical direction – though I will have something to say about this later on.

I will begin by considering Hegel's treatment of metaphysics in the *Encyclopedia* Logic, and in other texts. What will emerge is that Hegel does indeed reject a certain approach to philosophy that most people, especially in Hegel's day, have understood to be metaphysics. But he qualifies his critique of metaphysics in important ways. This not only leaves the door open for us to see him as putting forth a new, improved metaphysics – Hegel in fact makes explicit statements that suggest he is doing precisely this.

In the end, the issue of whether Hegel can be called a metaphysician comes dangerously close to being a semantic one. We could, of course, define metaphysics however we like, so as to either include or exclude Hegel. But I will suggest that we simply stick with how Hegel himself understood the term, not simply because I want to let Hegel speak for himself – but also because I think Hegel's basic understanding of metaphysics is absolutely correct. On his own terms, he will emerge as very much a metaphysician. Unsurprisingly, however, his metaphysics differs radically from the systems that preceded him.

Hegel's Treatment of Metaphysics

On February 5, 1812, Hegel wrote to Immanuel Niethammer:

Nine sheets of my Logic have been printed. Before Easter perhaps another twenty will be printed. What I can say about it for the time being is that these twenty-five to thirty [galley] sheets are only the first part, that they do not yet contain anything of what is usually called logic, that they constitute metaphysical or ontological logic: the first book is on Being, and the second on Essence, if there is still room for the second book in Part One. (*Briefe* n. 198/ Hegel 1984b, p. 261)

Here a careless reader might insist that Hegel is embracing the description of his Logic as metaphysical. But of course he makes it quite clear that he is confining this description to the parts of the Logic he refers to elsewhere as “objective logic”: the Doctrines of Being and Essence. The Introduction to the *Encyclopedia* Logic echoes this claim. There Hegel writes that, “Speculative Logic contains the older logic and metaphysics; it preserves the same forms of thought, laws, objects, but it develops and transforms them with further categories” (*Enc* § 9).² The key word here, of course, is “contains”: Hegel is saying that metaphysics

² Quotes are from the Geraets/Suchting/Harris translation (Works Cited: Hegel 1991).

ics, or metaphysical categories, are included within the Logic. But this would seem to imply that the whole of the Logic is *not* metaphysics, only a part of the whole. The Hegelian system, it seems, absorbs metaphysics as a partial, one-sided, or imperfect standpoint – but it transcends this standpoint. On this understanding of things, Hegel’s Logic can no more be identified with metaphysics than the *Philosophy of Right* can be identified with the partial standpoints of Abstract Right and Morality.

Indeed, if we turn to the *Vorbegriff* of the *Encyclopedia* Logic we seem to find Hegel rejecting metaphysics altogether, as an approach to philosophy he wishes to leave behind. There, he discusses three standpoints of which he is critical, three “positions of thought with respect to objectivity.” These constitute, Hegel says, a “further introduction” to clarify the intent of the Logic (*Enc* § 25). The first position he identifies with “metaphysics.” The second comprises both empiricism and the critical philosophy of Kant. The third he calls “immediate knowing” (*unmittelbares Wissen*), a position which corresponds to the “intuitionism” of Jacobi and Schleiermacher.

Of metaphysics, Hegel writes:

The first position is the naïve way of proceeding, which, being still unconscious of the antithesis of thinking within and against itself, contains the *belief* that *truth* is recognized, and what the objects genuinely are is brought before consciousness through reflection [*Nachdenken*]. In this belief, thinking goes straight to the objects; it reproduces the content of sense experience and intuition out of itself, as a content of thought, and is satisfied with this as the truth. All philosophy in its beginnings, all of the sciences, even the daily doing and dealing of consciousness, lives in this belief. (*Enc* § 26)

In the following paragraph he says that metaphysics “is always present as the way in which the *mere understanding* views the objects of reason” (*Enc* § 27). As a product of the understanding, metaphysics – on Hegel’s account – is thus an approach to truth that naively accepts either-or oppositions, applying them to subjects which, with equal naiveté, it has simply inherited from others and accepted uncritically.

Essentially, Hegel raises the following four objections against metaphysics in this section of the *Encyclopedia* Logic:

- 1) Metaphysicians simply accept certain “thought determinations” or predicates, and think they can know the Absolute or the real by attaching these predicates to it – as when the rationalist claims to deduce God’s various attributes from the definition of God (*Enc* § 28). Metaphysics never reflects on this procedure and its viability. It is fundamentally uncritical. Non-metaphysical readers like Hartmann are correct to point out that in such passages Hegel essentially accepts Kant’s critique of (rationalist) metaphysics.

2) Such an approach, Hegel maintains, cannot know the Absolute because it represents it in terms of predicates which express what he calls a “restricted content” (*beschränkter Inhalt*) (*Enc* § 29). But the Absolute is *absolute*: it cannot be comprehended by an externally-attached list of predicates. These predicates effectively treat the infinite as a finite thing. Therefore, this philosophical approach can never know the Absolute.

3) Metaphysics takes up God, the soul, and the cosmos as what Hegel calls “ready-made subjects” (*fertige gegebene Subjekte*) (*Enc* § 30). In other words, it accepts its principal subjects uncritically – in a sense thinking that it already knows them, or at least knows “what kind of thing” they are. And this should be taken quite literally: metaphysics takes its subjects as thing-like. This is obviously a problem related to the issue of how metaphysics applies its categories. Metaphysics takes its subjects as thing-like, as things with properties, and then assumes it can catalogue the properties, drawing these concepts uncritically from the categories of ordinary thought.

4) Metaphysics usually treats these concepts as participating in dyadic opposition to others: being vs. non-being, finite vs. infinite, etc. Of these pairs metaphysics predicates one of God, but not the other (God is being, God is infinite, etc.). Speculative philosophy, by contrast, thinks the Absolute through a new articulation of categories, developed by Hegel in his *Logic*, in which the dyadic opposition of thought forms – and with it the understanding itself – is overcome.

Moving Beyond “Former Metaphysics”

In sum, it would appear that Hegel decisively rejects metaphysics as a standpoint that speculative philosophy transcends. But matters are much more complicated than this. What I have omitted to mention thus far is that in the same section of the *Encyclopedia Logic*, virtually every time Hegel uses the term “metaphysics” he refers to “old metaphysics” (*alte Metaphysik*) or “former metaphysics” (*vormalige Metaphysik*). And he does this elsewhere. In the Introduction to the *Science of Logic*, Hegel contrasts his work to “former metaphysics” (*vormalige Metaphysik*) (*WL GW* 21.29).³ This quite obviously seems to imply a distinction between an older and a newer metaphysics: former metaphysics, as opposed to some new variety, perhaps Hegel’s own. Or does it imply this?

To better frame these issues, let’s look at the rest of what Hegel says about metaphysics in the *Encyclopedia Logic*. Immediately after laying out the critique

³ Quotes are from the Miller translation (Works Cited: Hegel 1969).

of metaphysics just discussed, he deals with the branches or subdivisions of metaphysics. These are ontology, rational psychology, cosmology, and natural theology. In short, he is discussing metaphysics in terms of its categorization by Christian Wolff. Indeed, Hegel makes it clear at the very beginning of his discussion of metaphysics in the *Encyclopedia* Logic that in fact he is referring specifically to modern rationalist or “dogmatist” metaphysics. He writes: “In its most determinate development, which is also the one closest to us, this way of thinking was *the former metaphysics* [*die vormalige Metaphysik*], the way it was constituted among us before the Kantian philosophy” (*Enc* § 27).

Looking at the wording of this passage very carefully, one could argue that Hegel means that the rationalist metaphysics of the recent, pre-Kantian past is merely the “most determinate development” of the standpoint he calls metaphysics. On this basis one might argue, further, that Hegel’s criticisms also apply to even older metaphysics, perhaps all the way back to the ancients. Indeed, Hegel’s accusation that metaphysicians take over their subject matter as “ready-made” and then apply predicates to it must call to mind scholasticism, not just the rationalism of Descartes, Leibniz, and Wolff. Hegel does, in fact, address this point explicitly – but he also makes it quite clear that his critique should not be understood as applying universally to all older metaphysics. He writes:

The material of this metaphysics [i.e., “former metaphysics”] was furnished by the earlier philosophers, and especially by the Scholastics. The understanding is, of course, one moment of speculative philosophy, but it is a moment at which we should not stop. Plato is not a metaphysician of this sort, and Aristotle still less so, although people usually believe the contrary. (*Enc* § 36 A)

In short, Hegel explicitly exempts Plato and Aristotle from the critique of metaphysics he mounts in the *Encyclopedia* Logic. Of course, this does not at all imply that he is endorsing the approach of either; he is merely making clear that theirs was a different sort of metaphysics, one that he holds in higher esteem. Still, Hegel’s words clearly suggest that he wants to distinguish between different forms of metaphysics, some of which he sees as superior to others. In Hegel’s entire corpus, there is no passage where he decisively rejects metaphysics as an enterprise, broadly construed. And this leaves open the possibility that while he may reject “former metaphysics,” he may be offering a metaphysics of his own.

Indeed, there is very strong evidence in Hegel’s writings that he saw himself as doing just that. One striking passage occurs in the *Encyclopedia* Logic, prior to the passages discussed earlier, where Hegel says “Thus *logic* coincides with *metaphysics* [*Die Logik fällt daher mit der Metaphysik zusammen*], with the science of *things* grasped in *thoughts* that used to be taken to express the *essential-*

ities of the *things* [Wesenheiten der Dinge]" (*Enc* § 24). This passage occurs in the *Vorbegriff* and it is clear from the context that here Hegel is not using "metaphysics" to refer narrowly to the first two divisions of the Logic – the so-called "objective logic" – but to the work as a whole. Hegel says something similar – and even stronger – in the Preface to the first edition of the *Science of Logic*: "Now whatever may have been accomplished for the form and content of science in other directions, the science of logic which constitutes [ausmacht] genuine metaphysics [eigentliche Metaphysik] or pure speculative philosophy [reine spekulative Philosophie] has hitherto still been much neglected" (*WL GW* 21.7).

However, the quote above from the *Encyclopedia Logic* also makes it clear that while the Logic coincides with metaphysics Hegel is, again, parting company with older metaphysics. Logic coincides with "the science of things grasped in thoughts," but it does not thereby express the "essences" of things; that was the aim of the older metaphysics. I will return later to the question of exactly how Hegel understands metaphysics to be "the science of things grasped in thoughts."

There are other places where Hegel uses "metaphysics" or "metaphysical" to describe what he is doing. For example, at the beginning of the Doctrine of Being in the *Encyclopedia Logic* he writes: "Being itself, as well as the following determinations (the logical determinations in general, not just those of being) may be looked upon as definitions of the Absolute, as the *metaphysical definitions of God*." And he clarifies this a couple of lines down: "For to define God metaphysically means to express his nature in *thoughts* as such; but the Logic embraces all thoughts while they are still in the form of thoughts" (*Enc* § 85).

We shouldn't be misled by the theological language Hegel uses here. We know that when writing of the Absolute Hegel often gave what we might call a "theological translation," and spoke of God. Those predisposed to reject the metaphysical understanding of Hegel (who, I will note later, are usually curiously silent on the subject of Hegel's philosophy of religion) might seize on this passage in order to suggest that his enterprise in the Logic can be understood as metaphysics only when it is dressed up in theological costume and presented as a description of God. However, the passages I discussed earlier from the *Vorbegriff* to the *Encyclopedia Logic* and from the *Science of Logic*, where Hegel states unequivocally (and free of all theological language) that the logic constitutes metaphysics, clearly militate against such an interpretation.

The picture that clearly emerges is that Hegel overcomes metaphysics only in the sense that he overcomes an outmoded form of it. But this older metaphysics is preserved as a moment within the Logic, which, as a whole, constitutes a new metaphysics that escapes the problems of the old (or so Hegel believed).

Indeed, Hegel announces his intention to revivify metaphysics on the very first page of the *Science of Logic*, in the Preface to the First Edition. In the second paragraph of the text he remarks that in his time the Kantian philosophy has caused metaphysics to be “extirpated root and branch,” and identifies this with “the renunciation of speculative thought.” Hegel bemoans this situation, saying, “If it is remarkable when a nation has become indifferent to its constitutional theory, to its national sentiments, its ethical customs and virtues, it is certainly no less remarkable when a nation loses its metaphysics, when the spirit which contemplates its own pure essence is no longer a present reality in the life of the nation.” And he remarks on “the strange spectacle of a cultured nation without metaphysics – like a temple richly ornamented in other respects but without a holy of holies” (WL GW 21.5–6). These comments are offered, of course, by way of introducing Hegel’s project in the *Logic*, and they are followed two pages later by the lines quoted earlier, in which Hegel states that the *Logic* “constitutes genuine metaphysics or pure speculative philosophy.”

To anticipate a possible objection, I could imagine someone pointing to Hegel’s statements – made in both versions of the *Logic*, but especially in the *Science of Logic* – that philosophy cannot begin with any presuppositions whatsoever, even about what philosophy is. For example, in the Introduction to the *Science of Logic* Hegel states that “what logic is cannot be stated beforehand, rather does this knowledge of what it is first emerge as the final outcome and consummation of the whole exposition” (WL GW 21.27). Hegel is especially emphatic about the presuppositionlessness of philosophy in the section that opens the Doctrine of Being in the *Science of Logic*: “With What Must the Science Begin?” Someone might draw on these remarks to argue that Hegel’s claims about the relation of his philosophy to metaphysics must be taken with a grain of salt, as so much loose talk. For in truth we cannot describe Hegel’s philosophy as metaphysics: to do so would be to presuppose a certain conception of philosophy at the outset, which would skew the result. Whatever talk Hegel may have engaged in about metaphysics, he did not, in fact, begin to philosophize with this sort of determinate conception of what he was producing.

I believe it is one of the virtues of some non-metaphysical interpreters that they continually emphasize the presuppositionlessness of Hegel’s system – which amounts really to an insistence upon the autonomy of reason. And I think we should take Hegel at his word when he says that he began from an indeterminate starting point, without presuppositions even about the nature of philosophy itself. However, what is quite clear from Hegel’s own statements is that once the *Logic* was completed – i.e., after the fact – Hegel considered it and identified it as amounting to a new form of metaphysics. Yes, we cannot, as Hegel says, know what the *Logic* is “beforehand”—but the knowledge of

“what it is” does indeed emerge as “the final outcome and consummation of the whole exposition.” And Hegel states what it is: he calls it metaphysics.

This is why most of the remarks in the *Logic* where Hegel relates his philosophy to metaphysics occur in the prefatory and introductory material of the two texts. In those places, just as he did in the Preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel is looking over his work and drawing conclusions about it. Given all the foregoing evidence, nothing could be clearer than that Hegel, surveying the *Logic* as a whole, realized that he had brought forth something that went radically beyond the “older metaphysics” – something which nevertheless, in his view, still constituted metaphysics.

The Nature of Metaphysics

But even if we are satisfied that Hegel did indeed understand himself as doing metaphysics, one all-important question looms large: in *just what sense* is Hegel’s philosophy a “new metaphysics”? Even if it is correct to conclude that Hegel believes that the older metaphysics has passed away and that what he is doing takes its place, that doesn’t by itself answer the question of what, exactly, he is doing. In what follows I will briefly sketch out what I take Hegel’s metaphysics to be, why he is right to see himself as a metaphysician, and why I believe we should take him at his word.

Let’s begin with the Absolute. As Beiser has stated, it is very significant that the non-metaphysical interpretation

cannot account for one, basic, straightforward and indisputable fact about Hegel’s philosophy: that its aim is to know the absolute, the infinite, or the unconditioned. Hegel tells us in his *Differenzschrift*, his first philosophical publication, that the aim of philosophy is to know the absolute through reason. Never did he depart from this early conception of the task of philosophy. (Beiser 1995, p. 3–4)

If someone wishes to challenge Beiser on this, and claim that Hegel did, later on, depart from this conception, they will have a tough time doing so through appeal to Hegel’s writings or lectures.

The quest to know the Absolute, or infinite, or unconditioned through reason is just how Kant understood metaphysics, and Hegel, of course, knew this.⁴

⁴ See, for example § 27 of the *Encyclopedia Logic*, where Hegel states that metaphysics is concerned with the “objects of reason.” On Kant’s understanding of metaphysics as an attempt to know the Absolute, many citations to the first and second editions of the *Critique of Pure Reason* could be marshalled here. See, for example, *KrV* B391/A334.

Therefore, Beiser goes on to state “If we accept that the main aim of Hegel’s philosophy is to know the absolute, then it is necessary to admit that it is a metaphysics in a perfectly clear and straightforward sense of that term” (Beiser 1995, p. 4). The mistake that is made by non-metaphysical Hegelians is that they assume that “knowledge of the Absolute” has to be interpreted in a pre-Kantian manner, as the sort of knowledge Kant argued was impossible. In other words, they assume that the Absolute or unconditioned must be some kind of transcendent being, a “One” or “Divine Mind,” as Pippin puts it, transcending the realm of finite beings. But this simply misses the central point of Hegel’s philosophy.

Yes, Hegel claims to be doing metaphysics and, yes, he accepted Kant’s understanding of metaphysics as seeking to know the Absolute. But he does not understand the Absolute as a being that transcends this world. Instead, for Hegel, the Absolute is this world, the universe of which we are a part, understood as a One; as an organic or internally-related whole. Now, Kant held that “the universe as a whole,” the cosmos, was a transcendental idea or idea of reason, which was illusory in that it was a mere hypostasis of reason, but which also served a regulative role in our search for knowledge. Hegel, however, replaced Kant’s conception of reason with his own, in which dialectic still sets up antitheses, but these oppositions are transcended through speculation, the “positive” moment of Hegelian reason. It is through reason in Hegel’s sense, through Hegel’s dialectical system of philosophy, that we may know the universe as whole – that we know it, in fact, *as* a dialectical system. It is through Hegelian reason that we may consummate the quest for wisdom and obtain “actual knowledge of what truly is,” as Hegel puts it in the *Phenomenology* (*PhG* p. 46).⁵ And what truly is, or what is true? “The true is the whole” (*PhG* p. 11).

Recall the passage from the *Encyclopedia Logic* quoted earlier where Hegel states that the Logic coincides with metaphysics, with “the science of things grasped in thoughts.” Hegel’s Logic is indeed “the science of things grasped in thoughts,” but in a sense quite different from that of the older metaphysics. The dialectic of the Logic articulates a conceptual system – a conceptual whole – which gives us the key to understanding the being of the whole that is the universe itself. The Logic is a self-specifying system of ideas that achieves completion in the idea of idea itself, in Absolute Idea. Nature is then seen as a scale of forms intelligible in terms of its approximation to a being that expresses, in concrete form, the self-relation of Absolute Idea. That being, of course, is man. It is through the forms of human spirit in its absolute character – in art, religion, and preeminently, philosophy – that existence itself achieves completion. For it

⁵ Citations refer to the Miller translation (Works Cited: Hegel 1977).

is in the philosopher's contemplation of the whole that the whole confronts itself.

If we accept that Hegel is providing us with a metaphysics, just what sort of metaphysics is it? Is it general metaphysics (or ontology), or is it special metaphysics (i.e., theology, rational psychology, and cosmology)? The answer, unsurprisingly, is that this distinction is overcome in Hegel's system. Hegelian metaphysics is both ontology and special metaphysics – and it is neither. Or, to put it a different way, it is simultaneously ontology, theology, rational psychology, and cosmology – and it is none of these.

On the one hand, it is easy to see that the Hegelian system can be understood as an ontology – as an account of being as such. Hegel remarks in the *Encyclopedia Logic* that “the logical is to be sought in a system of thought-determinations in which the antithesis between subjective and objective (in its usual meaning) disappears” (*Enc* § 24 A1). The “thought-determinations” of the *Logic* are neither subjective nor objective – but, in another way, they are both. They are not simply the subjective categories in which we think; they are also objective. They express the being of things; they constitute an ontology. To be is to be a member of the whole, the idea of which is expressed in the *Logic*. And to be a member of the whole is to occupy some point on the scale of forms approximating to self-related thought.

However, while it is correct to say that the Hegelian system can be understood as ontology, it also expresses the underlying truth that is imperfectly approached in the problematic sciences of rational psychology, cosmology, and theology (the Wolffian branches of “special metaphysics”). For the *Logic* provides us with the “animating soul,” to use Hegel's own phrase (*Enc* § 24 A2), of spirit and of nature – the key to understanding both. Further, as Hegel never tires of reminding us, his Absolute is the truth that theology understands as God. (Here I will note in passing that one of the major deficits of the non-metaphysical reading is that it cannot easily make sense of well-known claims by Hegel such as “God is the one and only object of philosophy ...” and “philosophy is theology” (*VRel* p. 84).⁶

Thus, we find that Hegel's system in effect collapses the distinction between general metaphysics (or ontology) and special metaphysics. In this sense alone, it goes beyond “former metaphysics.” Hegel's metaphysics, his *Logic*, gives us *the being of the whole*. But Hegel is careful to tell us that it is only *idea*. The Absolute, in short, is not the same thing as Absolute Idea. The final addition to the *Encyclopedia Logic* reads as follows: “We have now returned to the concept of the

⁶ Citations of *VRel* refer to the Hodgson translation (Works Cited: Hegel 1984a).

Idea with which we began. At the same time, this return is an advance. What we began with was being, abstract being, while now we have the *Idea* as *being*; but this *Idea* that is, is *Nature*" (*diese seiende Idee aber ist die Natur*) (*Enc* § 244 A).

Hegel does not commit the cardinal sin of the "older metaphysics": taking the Absolute or the infinite as a ready-made object, existing whole and complete apart from this world, and then understanding it in terms of ready-made categories. Instead, to repeat, the Absolute is this world, understood as a self-specifying, dialectical scale of forms moving toward final consummation in the self-knowledge of the philosopher.

Conclusion

The foregoing "metaphysical interpretation" of Hegel will be familiar to my readers: it is the understanding of Hegel that we find in numerous authors. And I think it is just such an interpretation that non-metaphysical readers wish to avoid. However, it must be noted that there is a very significant difference between the account I have offered above and the alleged "metaphysical interpretation" that is frequently attacked by the non-metaphysical Hegelians.

I have already quoted Pippin setting himself against the interpretation of Hegel that involves a "self-posing Divine Mind ejecting the moments of Spirit's history and the determinations of the natural world." Let us now consider a remark made by D. Kolb: "I want most of all to preclude the idea that Hegel provides a cosmology including the discovery of a wondrous new superentity, a cosmic self or a world soul or a supermind" (Kolb 1986, p. 42–3). Pippin and Kolb both seem to think that the metaphysical interpretation of Hegel involves understanding the Absolute – or Spirit, or Reason – to be some sort of ghostly super-being that transcends the physical universe. The trouble is that I can't think of any serious Hegel scholars who have actually understood him in this way. Since sharing an earlier version of this essay with various colleagues, it has been suggested to me that authors such as J. McTaggart, J. Findlay, Q. Lauer, E. Harris, E. Fackenheim, and Ch. Taylor understood Hegel's Absolute to be some kind of transcendent entity. But I don't read these authors as saying this at all.

Taking the Absolute as a transcendent being depends upon completely failing to grasp Hegel's very well-known argument that the true infinite cannot be understood in opposition to the finite, as transcending it. Hegel's Absolute is not something that exists apart from the whole: as I have said, it is the whole itself. Further the alleged "metaphysical reading" that Kolb sets himself against would also seem to depend upon failing to understand Hegel's very clear state-

ments to the effect that religion and theology, in treating the Absolute as God, do so from the stand-point of a “picture thinking” that can’t help but see its subject matter as some sort of transcendent superbeing. But again, though perhaps I’ve missed someone, I can’t think of any Hegel interpreters, even of the distant past – even Walter Stace – who fail to understand Hegel in these matters. The so-called “metaphysical reading” of Hegel that some today have set themselves in opposition to, thus appears to be nothing more than a straw man.

And this leads me to a final, difficult question. As the foregoing has demonstrated, Hegel makes it quite clear that he sees his philosophy as a metaphysics. Further, the “metaphysical interpretation” that I, and others, have put forth is abundantly supported by countless passages in Hegel’s corpus, where he reflects on the nature and purpose of his philosophical system. In the face of this, one simply has to ask what could motivate some to insist that Hegel’s philosophy cannot and should not be seen as metaphysical. The extreme variety of such a position (and, one might say, its *reductio ad absurdum*) is surely that of Hartmann, who insisted that Hegel’s philosophy was merely a “modest” hermeneutic of categories, “devoid of existence claims” (Hartmann 1976, p. 124, 110).

Pippin might, I believe, shed some light on this mystery; on what motivates non-metaphysical readings of Hegel. At one point he states that the metaphysical interpretation makes Hegel look like “some premodern anachronism” (Pippin 1989, p. 5). And here is a further clue. Another non-metaphysical Hegelian, Stephen Bungay, deals with the abundant evidence for the metaphysical Hegel by conceding that there is indeed “a bad old Hegel.” “We come across him at intervals,” Bungay says, but he assures us that those intervals “are fairly widely spaced.” And that “The categorical philosopher in between is worth a hearing” (Bungay 1994, p. 38).

There is indeed much in Hegel that goes against the spirit of our times; much to make a modern person cringe. For one thing, there’s all that talk about God. And even though Hegel makes it quite clear that his is very much a “God of the philosophers,” the suggestion that there might be some deep truth underlying religion and theology is currently out of fashion. But perhaps the most problematic and embarrassing thing about Hegel, in the eyes of us moderns, is the sheer grandeur and ambition of his system. We are living at a time when the idea of a grand metaphysical system, of a philosophy that attempts to explain everything, is considered to be much worse than passé. But, I confess, this was precisely what drew me to Hegel in the first place.

The price of advocating the “metaphysical Hegel” is that we must endure the condescension and dismissiveness of colleagues of other philosophical persuasions (and other disciplines) who see this as a “premodern anachronism”; as, at best, irrelevant. So, there is a good deal of temptation, I believe, to recast

or reconstruct Hegel in a form that may make him more palatable to those whose sensibilities are very much in tune with the times.

This has the undeniable benefit of making Hegel somewhat more respectable in today's intellectual circles. But it is obtained at the enormous price of dispensing with the things that make Hegel a truly great philosopher. Hegel is a great philosopher because, like the other luminaries of the tradition, he attempts to give us an account of the being of the whole. And his account is, to my mind, the most profound and intellectually satisfying in the history of philosophy. In short, Hegel is a great philosopher *because* he is a great metaphysician.

In the end I prefer Hegel as he is – rather than as some of his recent interpreters would like him to be.⁷

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⁷ I wish to thank Martin J. De Nys and Philip Grier for their comments on an earlier draft of this essay. I have written it in the spirit of Grier's late friend Errol E. Harris, who is the main influence on my reading of Hegel. I therefore dedicate this essay to his memory.

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Hegel's Overcoming of the Overcoming of Metaphysics

What is metaphysics? Is it the study of being *qua* being, that foundational ontology with which philosophy must begin to obtain the universal wisdom grounding knowledge of all particular domains? Or is metaphysics the entirety of synthetic *a priori* knowledge, where reason obtains new knowledge relying on thought alone? Or is metaphysics simply the enterprise of knowing things in themselves, searching for conceptual determinations in the given that cognition confronts, certain of the correspondence of thought and being?

Each of these projects of metaphysics has come under withering attack so as to leave us in a post-metaphysical predicament. The alleged outcomes of those attacks have, however, all been called into question by arguments developed by Hegel. Has Hegel thereby rehabilitated metaphysics? Or has Hegel left us a systematic philosophy without metaphysics?

The Repudiation of Foundational Ontology and its Hegelian Critique

The critique of foundational ontology has its great pioneer in Kant, whose transcendental turn proceeds from the seemingly irrefutable insight that beginning philosophy by conceiving being takes for granted the authority of philosophical knowing. Insupportable dogmatism cannot be avoided if one begins by making claims about what is without first examining knowing and establishing cognition's ability to know objects. Foundational ontology must accordingly cede first philosophy to epistemology. The knowing of knowing should be the preliminary undertaking of philosophical investigation and only if and when foundational epistemology secures some authority for cognition, can philosophy turn to investigate what is.

This might seem to relieve metaphysics by allowing ontology to operate after epistemology. Kant's own transcendental philosophy, however, shows that making epistemology primary can only make sense if the object of knowing is determined by the structure of knowing. Unless this is the case, knowing has no way of determining the objectivity of its claims, for immediate access to being is precisely what is called into question by the transcendental turn away from foundational ontology. Yet, if knowing can know its objects only insofar as

they are at least in part determined by the structure of knowing, objectivity becomes something posited by knowing. Instead of being determined in and through itself, objectivity is subject to an external necessity of efficient causality, for all objects are conditioned by the same structure of cognition, no matter what they are. This means that knowable objectivity is governed by a mechanistic law that is indifferent to the specific natures of individual objects. Moreover, since knowable objectivity is relative to knowing, it is a domain of appearance, restricting knowledge to phenomena rather than things in themselves. Since the universal and necessary character of objects is determined by the structure of cognition, the preliminary examination of knowing turns out to contain the principles of possible objects of experience, which is all that philosophy can know about nature. As Kant himself admits, his subsequent *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* merely extrapolates upon what is already established in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (cf. *MAN AA* 4:470, 473–4, 477). Hence, the metaphysics that epistemology is supposed to secure turns out to be doubly undermined. On the one hand, it consists in knowledge about what necessarily applies to objects of experience, that is, mere phenomena. On the other hand, it has nothing fundamentally new to offer beyond what epistemology reveals in its knowing of knowing. Metaphysics in any wider speculative sense is dead.

Hegel, however, shows that foundational epistemology's enfeeblement of metaphysics succumbs to the same dogmatism of which it rightfully accuses foundational ontology. Just as foundational ontology made direct reference to what is without critiquing the knowing it employs, so foundational epistemology's knowing of knowing makes claims about the structure of knowing and its constructive determining of the object of knowledge without ever establishing the authority of the knowing of foundational epistemology. By turning to investigate the knowing of objects, foundational epistemology puts under scrutiny a type of cognition necessarily different from that it employs. Whereas the knowing it investigates is a knowing of phenomena, the knowing the epistemologist wields is a knowing of knowing. Consequently, the foundational epistemologist's own cognition is not put under scrutiny and its authority remains dogmatically presupposed. Moreover, as Hegel never tires of pointing out, the only "objective" cognition that Kant legitimates is a "knowing" of appearance, which can hardly qualify as genuine knowledge (cf. *WL GW* 21.29–30). Not only does the cognition of phenomena remain subjectively conditioned, restricted as it is to what knowing puts into its "object", but the conditioned character of posited objectivity precludes the spontaneity of knowing from being known "objectively." The determining structures of cognition must remain a noumenal domain, just as inaccessible to objective knowledge as things in themselves.

In face of these Hegelian criticisms, the reduction of metaphysics to knowledge of what holds true universally and necessarily of empirical phenomena is both incoherent and unjustifiable.

The Repudiation of Synthetic *a priori* Knowledge and its Hegelian Critique

Kant's critical philosophy seeks to redeem a diminished domain for metaphysics by allowing for synthetic *a priori* knowledge in which different concepts stand in non-analytic necessary connection thanks to their relationship to the non-conceptual content of sensible intuition. Kant must rely upon this relation to non-conceptual content, which limits metaphysics to knowledge of what is necessary in experience, because of a fundamental assumption about concepts that precludes any synthetic *a priori* knowledge by means of thought alone. This assumption is none other than the principle of non-contradiction, which holds that each and every concept has a fixed given content and can become nothing other than that. All conceptual content is what it is and not what it is not. Accordingly, thought cannot connect different concepts through thought alone. In thinking any concept, thought only grasps that concept and what is contained within it. No concept, that is, no thought, can connect itself to what it is not, that is, to any concept different from itself, let alone to anything other than thought. Nor can any concept develop into something else. Governed by the principle of non-contradiction, concepts are rigid terms, incapable of any development and self-transformation. Consequently, the only way Kant can uncover any necessary connections between different concepts is within the framework of experience. There the alleged tie between understanding and sensibility within self-consciousness enables forms of sensible intuition to secure the necessary synthesis of distinct thoughts.

If, however, the Kantian transcendental account of experience is itself suspect and metaphysics consists in a body of pure synthetic *a priori* knowledge, then the submission of thought to the principle of non-contradiction leaves metaphysics entirely in question. So long as concepts are just what they are and not what they are not, concepts cannot determine relationships between concepts that are not contained within one another nor determine relationships between concepts and what is not a concept. All thought can then do is think conceptual contents it finds given and analyze what determinations they contain. Thought can no more generate new conceptual content than obtain knowledge by thought alone of anything other than the given conceptual contents it hap-

pens to come across. On either account, philosophy, understood as a discipline attempting to obtain knowledge by thought alone, becomes reduced to analysis, examining the consistency of conceptual contents given by experience or linguistic usage. Truth lies outside such pure thought, precluding any metaphysics that would obtain new knowledge by thought alone, relating different concepts necessarily.

The elimination of metaphysics through the reduction of thought to analysis and submission to the principle of non-contradiction has become the shared dogma of both contemporary analytic philosophy and its post-modern counterpart. By leaving particular content outside the bounds of reason, each of these schools gives new life to the Kantian dictum that thought without intuition is empty. Analytic philosophy does so by taking formal logic to be determinative of all thinking, leaving philosophy having to turn to linguistic usage, the practice of empirical science, and given aesthetic and moral intuitions to have anything to which to apply its formal, otherwise empty reason. Post-modernism takes a similar route by turning to a “difference” outside of thought as the source of all content, while unmasking how reason is devoid of autonomy and instead conditioned by extra-philosophical factors.

The critical moves that underlie these repudiations of metaphysics are crystallized in *The Twilight of the Idols*, where Nietzsche castigates philosophy’s constitutive privileging of reason as a vehicle of truth. On the one hand, Nietzsche maintains, simply by relying on reason in all its efforts, philosophy assumes that truth lies in what is thinkable. No matter what philosophy may argue, the mere fact that philosophy uses thought as its privileged instrument means that philosophy always presupposes that conceptual determination is exhaustive of what truly is. On the other hand, thought, Nietzsche observes, is a domain of fixed, abstract universals, which contain nothing individual or changing. All the becoming and individuality of reality is thereby banished from philosophical investigation, whose metaphysical labors can only substitute a ghostly scaffold of dead abstractions for real actuality (cf. Nietzsche, 1990, p. 45–51).

Nietzsche’s critique is devastating for metaphysics so long as the thought of philosophy consists of universals lacking individuality and dynamic process and so long as philosophy begins by making determinate conceptual claims about either being or knowing. Certainly the debilitating presuppositions that Nietzsche exposes afflict all those philosophers who submit thinking to the principle of non-contradiction and who commence philosophizing with foundational ontology or foundational epistemology. Yet must all philosophical thought fall prey to these limitations?

Nietzsche and his latter day followers seek to escape the limitations they expose by appealing to the primacy of what they identify as lying beyond the grasp

of the fixed, formal thinking of past philosophy. Nietzsche embraces the allegedly authentic dynamic reality of sensuous immediacy as if it could serve as the bedrock of a self-assertion that affirms particularity devoid of any pretense of universality. Instead of laying claim to any illusory universality for rational autonomy, with its democratic, socialist, and Christian “hypocrisies,” Nietzsche extends the primacy of sensuous becoming to a will to power that imposes particular, arbitrary values without concealing their lack of universality. His more recent disciples, most notably G. Deleuze in *Difference and Repetition*, affirm the primacy of “difference,” which comprises an individuality unmediated by thought that challenges our thinking to engage in philosophical reflections that neither accept the adequacy of abstract conception nor presuppose the identity of true being and what is conceivable (cf. Deleuze 1994, p. 26, 129 ff.).

These Nietzschean alternatives are undermined by Hegel on two parallel fronts, one refuting the starting points that Nietzsche and his followers oppose to traditional metaphysics, the other freeing philosophical thought from the “dead phantoms” of abstract universality and any *presupposition* of the identity of thought and being.

First of all, as Hegel observes in the opening chapter of his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, any attempt to uphold the primacy of sensuous immediacy cannot help but fail (cf. *PhG* ch. I, “Sense-Certainty”). Nietzsche may want to supplant the abstractions of formal thinking with the concrete givenness of sensuous becoming, but the moment he attempts to refer to that “real world” he cannot say what he means. Any descriptive account substitutes universal terms for what is supposed to be individual, whereas any mere indicative reference to what is here, now, or for me ends up conjuring a field of substitutable factors, all of which are equally here, now, or confronting an I. Moreover, even if one could refer to sensuous being without canceling its singular immediacy, affirming it as what ultimately is would be a dogmatic metaphysical claim that can no more be justified than any other first principle of being. No given determinacy can escape that pitfall, for at the beginning of philosophical investigation, any definite claim about what is or about knowing is arbitrary.

This arbitrariness applies equally to Deleuze’s substitution of “difference” for Nietzsche’s sensuous immediacy. Although Deleuze, like his forerunner, presents his privileged surd in reaction to the failure of abstract thought to grasp the individual, the latter’s failure cannot alone justify the alternative of “difference,” unless one surreptitiously accepts a principle of excluded middle. Of course, both Nietzsche and Deleuze tend in this direction since their reduction of reason to a warehouse of immobile fixed abstractions results from submitting thought to the principle of non-contradiction, whose corollary is the principle of excluded middle. Can “difference” possibly be primary?

Hegel's account of determinacy in the *Science of Logic* shows that determinacy itself issues from the unity of being and nothing, which arises from the elimination of all immediate claims about being or knowing (cf. *WL GW* 21.94–8). Indeterminacy, or being, is nothing and insofar as nothing is being, we have becoming, whose parallel aspects of coming and ceasing to be end up paralyzing themselves into an immediate unity of being and nothing. They do so simply because the “movements” from being to nothing and nothing to being cancel themselves, since the nothing to which being reverts is immediately being and the being to which nothing reverts is immediately nothing. The two sides of becoming thus turn into being *and* nothing in the form of being, for they are now immediately given together, without any other mediating factors. Determinacy can consist of nothing more than this, since anything else would beg the question by basing determinacy on something determinate. Nonetheless, determinacy can have not just being, but a *determinate* being only in contrast to an other. The otherness of that other cannot be immediately given, but depends upon its contrast with something else to be determinately what it is not. Something and other, however, cannot provide for their own individuations since both end up having the same specification. Something turns out to be both something and other since something is the other of its other, just as the other turns out to be something and other since the other is something in contrast to what it is not (cf. *WL GW* 21.102–10). Hence, “difference” can neither just be immediate nor provide individuality as otherness.

The primacy of “difference” fares no better if “difference” is treated as a category of essence. Instead of being immediately given, “difference” then resides in the reflection of inner distinction in which identity consists. “Difference” then not only presupposes the entire development of the categories of the Logic of Being, but cannot be separated from identity. Moreover, neither difference nor identity can provide individuality any more than can something and other. Every self-reflected factor has both difference and identity no matter what it is (cf. *WL GW* 11.260–2; 265–70).

Can “difference” then signify an individuality devoid of universality, as every nominalism takes for granted? “Difference” should be determined in and through itself, without depending upon terms of reflection, like identity and essence, or upon “concepts”, that is, universals. To avoid any qualitative characterization, Deleuze invokes intensity or degree as the distinguishing rubric for “difference”, as if this could establish an individuality without universality (cf. Deleuze, 1994, p. 26, 117–18, 223, 230–4). Intensity, however, is a form of quantitative determination. As Hegel shows in the Logic of Being, intensity or degree emerges from the determination of the relations of quanta, which take extensive and intensive forms, each convertible into the other since every degree

(e.g. the ninety-ninth) can be an extensive amount (e.g. ninety-nine degrees) and vice versa (cf. *WL GW* 21.208–16). Not only does intensity presuppose the determination of quantity in general, but it presupposes the logical development of quality. Without quality, the relation of something and other, and the development of the infinite by which the relation to other is overcome, there can be no self-relation. Self-relation provides the one, whose contrast to the void turns into relations of attraction and repulsion, whose reversion into one another provides in turn the unification of continuity and discreteness constitutive of quantity. All of these logical developments are presupposed by intensive quantity, rendering any determination of “difference” through degree anything but primary (cf. *WL GW* 21.96–177).

Nonetheless, can individuality otherwise retain its unique character without involving universality? Hegel's *Science of Logic* exhaustively illustrates how individuation cannot be achieved through either the contrastive determinations of the Logic of Being or the determined determinacies of the Logic of Essence. Qualitative difference never attains individuation because determination by negation always leaves each determinacy equally defined by what it is not (cf. *WL GW* 21.105–10). Quantitative difference lacks individuality since every quantum is qualitatively indistinguishable, allowing for multiple substitutions in every extensive or intensive magnitude (cf. *WL GW* 21.193–214). The same lack of individuation applies to determinations of measure, since qualitative quantities are always prey to nodal series, where each measure entails something measureless that is no less a determinate measure. At each juncture, the new measure relation is determined in contrast to what it is not as well as being in continuity with other examples that have not yet reached the next nodal break (cf. *WL GW* 21.364–7). Either way, measure cannot be unique.

Categories of essence can never supply individuality because the determiners of determined determinacies, such as ground or cause, can always determine multiple derivative factors. Since what categories of essence posit is always different from essence itself, what is posited need not be unique, but may be one of many posits of the same prior factor. A ground may condition many phenomena, just as a cause may have multiple effects.

By contrast, the logic of the Concept comprises a logic of individuality due to how the universal, the Concept as such, entails both the particular and the individual. The intrinsic connection between universality, particularity, and individuality holds for even the least concrete forms of universality, the abstract universal and class, with which both analytic philosophy and the post-modern deconstruction of reason tend to identify conceptual determination. The abstract universal, as abstracted from given individuals, seems to contain only what is common to them all, without specifying the features that differentiate its partic-

ulars from one another. Even though this abstraction leaves such generalization incapable of providing *a priori* knowledge about anything else regarding its instances, the abstract universal cannot retain its constitutive commonality unless it relates to a *plurality* of particulars. These particulars all relate to the universal in an identical fashion, all being instances of its commonality, which applies to them with indifference to their other features. Hence, the particularity of the instances does not distinguish them. If, on the other hand, the instances were just particular, standing in the same relation to their common universal, they would have nothing to distinguish them and maintain their plurality. They would collapse into one, undermining the constitutive commonality on which abstract universality itself depends. Consequently, the particulars of the abstract universal must also be differentiated particulars, that is, distinct individuals.

The same necessary tie between universal and individual holds true for class. Just like the instances of an abstraction, so the members of a class are members in the same way—each belonging to their grouping with indifference to their other features. Nonetheless, these members cannot have their plurality unless they are not just members, but differentiated members. They must be individuals as well. If not, there can be no plurality of membership and the distinction between class and member becomes undermined. Here, too, the universality of class depends upon the individuality as well as the particularity of its members.

Although the universality of genus and species is more concrete than either abstract universal or class, it also seems to leave the individuality of its members undetermined. The members of a genus may have a particularity inherent in the genus, whose unity necessarily determines the specific differences of its species. Nonetheless, the members of the infima species, which cannot have any further species under it, are no more distinguished from one another by their species being than are the instances of a generalization or the members of a class. Still, in order for the species to have members, they must be differentiated members, requiring the genus and species to involve not just particulars, but individuals as well.

Hegel may distinguish the different forms of universality in the specification of the different forms of judgment, but in the concept of concept, which precedes the concept of judgment, the necessary connection of universal, particular, and individual is made patently clear from the side of individuality itself (cf. *WL GW* 12.32–43). Not only must the universal entail individuality to have particularity, but individuality cannot have its unique character without combining universality and particularity. The individual is the unity of universality and particularity because what is individual is uniquely determined in and through itself. As individual, its differentiation is wholly bound up with its own unity or selfhood. To be unique, what distinguishes it must be its own self, whose relation to itself

must pervade the entirety of its determination, uniting its universality with its particularization. The individual's determination is thus none other than *self-determination*.

The introduction to the *Philosophy of Right* makes this explicit, illustrating how individuality's unity of universality and particularity is intrinsic to self-determination (cf. *RPh* § 5–7). The example of the will exhibits this insofar as the will cannot be free just by having a universality whereby it is not restricted to any given particular choice. This purely negative freedom is not enough, for the will must equally give itself particular determination. Otherwise it has no determination and its freedom is devoid of actuality. This particular determination will escape being determination by something else, or heteronomy, only insofar as the will remains at one with itself in its determination. That determination is *its* determination, its *self-determination*, only insofar as its particular character equally comprises the universality of the will. That is, the particular determinacy the will obtains is one it has given itself without being compelled by anything else to have that determination. The will retains its universality in its particularization and thereby has individuality, where what distinguishes it is bound up with its own unity or self. That self is not something given or posited, but rather constituted in and through its own free development.

The logic of the Concept, or of universality, is thus not just the logic of individuality, but equally the logic of self-determination. This connection between universality and freedom secures the autonomy of conceptual determination. It also secures the exclusive ability of autonomous thought to grasp objectivity, which is determined in and through itself rather than being determined by some external ground like mere phenomena.

This self-determined character of the Concept gives the lie to the post-modern claim that reason is heteronomous, always determined by some foundation or other. It also gives the lie to the post-modern claim that there can be individuality outside of universality, i.e., an individuality opaque to thought. The unique character of individuality depends upon the unity of universality and particularity. Without that unity, all one can have is determinacy through negation or determinacy through positing, neither of which provides individuation. Deleuze may be right to acknowledge that difference cannot be individual if it is determined through contrast with an other or by being subject to determining conditions. He is wrong, however, to propose that difference can provide individuality without universality and conceptual determination.

The freedom of thought further signifies that the conceptualization of objectivity cannot rest upon any assumption of the identity of reason and actuality. Precisely because conceptual determination is self-determining, the objectivity of thought cannot be given as something underlying reason. Rather, it must be

the result of conceptual determination, which has no given character but must produce through its own activity all known content that counts as rational.

Admittedly, if thought were governed by the principle of non-contradiction it could no more determine what is other than thought than generate any new thought determinations. Such thinking could never establish its own objectivity any more than it could rise above the labors of analysis and address truth rather than consistency. If, as Hegel has argued, universality involves individuality and the Concept is self-determining, thought cannot help but generate new conceptual content and be in a position to relate itself to what it is not.

Hegel and the Future of Metaphysics

If metaphysics is identified with ontology, where reason thinks what is given under the assumption of the identity of thought and being, then Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* and *Science of Logic* provide, respectively, the internal refutation and overcoming of metaphysics. The *Phenomenology* offers the self-undermining of metaphysics by observing how thinking that confronts the given cannot validate its knowledge claims nor uphold the opposition of subject and object on which its "metaphysical" confrontation rests. The *Science of Logic* overcomes the metaphysics of ontology by showing how conceptual determination can autonomously develop without any determinate presuppositions, including any presupposition of the unity of thought and objectivity.

In the Introduction to the *Science of Logic*, Hegel notes that Kant had transformed metaphysics into logic (cf. *WL GW* 21.35).¹ Kant did so by supplanting ontology as first philosophy with foundational epistemology, where knowing takes knowing as its object. The knowing of knowing is the recipe of logic, which thinks thinking. The Kantian transcendental turn cannot, however, consummate this transformation because the knowing employed by the foundational epistemologist cannot be the same as the knowing it puts under scrutiny. The knowing under investigation in foundational epistemology is not a knowing of knowing, but a knowing of objects distinct from knowing. For just this reason, the transcendental critique of knowing cannot critique the knowing it employs in inves-

¹ There, Hegel writes: "The critical philosophy had, it is true, already turned *metaphysics* into *logic*, but it, like the later idealism, as previously remarked, was overawed by the object, and so the logical determinations were given an essentially subjective significance with the result that these philosophies remained burdened with the object they had avoided and were left with the residue of a thing-in-itself, an infinite obstacle, as a beyond" (trans. Miller, *Works Cited*: Hegel 1967, p. 51).

tigating the knowledge of objects. In order for the knowing of knowing to be properly logical, the difference between knowing and its object must be overcome, for this overcoming of the constitutive opposition of consciousness is what delivers the element of logic. That element consists in a thinking that cannot be distinguished from what it thinks. Since such logical thought does not have any object prior to the engagement of its thinking, logic proper must begin without any presuppositions regarding method and content or any differentiation of subject and object. This systematic logic, not transcendental logic, is what genuinely overcomes the metaphysics of foundational ontology.

Systematic logic could be said to comprise a body of synthetic *a priori* knowledge insofar as the self-development of self-thinking thought is both synthetic and analytic at once (*WL GW* 12.247–8). It is synthetic, since autonomous thought generates and encompasses new content, but it is equally analytic since the differentiation of categories is contained within the totality of logic that is underway constituting itself. Nonetheless, synthetic *a priori* knowledge is not restricted to logic. Precisely because the autonomy of conceptualization enables thought to grasp both what is other than itself and what is determined in and through itself, reason can advance beyond the thinking of thinking to the autonomous conceptualization of what is other than thought. In this way, Hegel's philosophical system offers a body of synthetic *a priori* knowledge that contains both logic and what is “real” or non-logical.

The Hegelian project therefore supplants both the metaphysics of ontology and the metaphysics of foundational epistemology, which restricts synthetic *a priori* knowledge to knowledge of phenomena of experience. In so doing, Hegelian philosophy equally overturns the anti-metaphysical dogmas of Nietzsche and his post-modern followers.

Death to metaphysics! Long live metaphysics!

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Andrew Buchwalter

A Critique of Non-Metaphysical Readings of Hegel's Practical Philosophy

Introduction

It is well known that Hegel asserted that his *Philosophy of Right* is informed by his logical-metaphysical theory and should so be read. As he writes in the Preface: "it will be readily noticed that the work as a whole, like the construction of its parts, is based on the *logical spirit*," and "[i]t is also chiefly from this point of view that I would wish this treatise to be understood and judged" (*RPh* Preface, p. 10).¹ In recent years, however, many interpreters of his practical philosophy have largely disregarded this directive. Some regard Hegel's logical-metaphysical thought as a form of speculative dogmatism that should simply be ignored in favor of specific attention to the material insights contained in his practical thought. Others hold that, while Hegel's metaphysical claims may have been instructive for his own age, they no longer speak to us today. Still others assert that what is of value in Hegel's practical philosophy can be fully appreciated without engaging the complexities of his metaphysical theory. Yet others view Hegelian metaphysics wholly as a contemplative exercise with little relevance to matters of social, political and historical import. And some are inspired by the Rawlsian contention that practical philosophy today must be pursued non-metaphysically, or the Habermasian contention that it must be pursued post-metaphysically.

Whatever its particular hue, the non-metaphysical approach to Hegel's practical philosophy is common especially to his Anglo-American interpreters, who historically have had little patience for metaphysical speculation. In different ways, Z. A. Pelczynski, T. Pinkard, R. Pippin, R. Solomon, Ch. Taylor, and A. Wood have advanced non-metaphysical interpretations of Hegel's practical thought. But this approach has also been promoted by some of Hegel's continental interpreters, as the work of A. Honneth attests.

In what follows I question this reading of Hegel's practical philosophy. My aim is not to present a general account of the relationship of metaphysics and politics in Hegel, something certainly not possible within the scope of this essay, if at all. Nor do I wish to suggest that non-metaphysical approaches are without value in elucidating features of his practical philosophy. What I do

¹ Quotations refer to the Nisbet translation (Works Cited: Hegel 1991a).

seek to show, however, is that such approaches do a disservice to our efforts to comprehend core themes in Hegel's practical thought. I focus on three issues in particular: 1) Hegel's idea of objective spirit, 2) his concept of realized freedom and the correlative conception of action on which it is based, and 3) his conception of dialectics. All have been interpreted non-metaphysically, and all are better understood, I argue, when construed in terms of the logico-metaphysical considerations rejected by proponents of the non-metaphysical view. I conclude by briefly commenting on the value such considerations hold for understanding the contemporary significance of Hegel's practical philosophy.

Objective Spirit

A central focus of the non-metaphysical reading of Hegel's practical philosophy is his theory of Objective Spirit, the second section in the *Philosophy of Spirit*, between Subjective and Absolute Spirit. On this reading Hegel advances a novel approach to practical philosophy, one that does not appeal to general, essentialist, or abstract notions of reason, but instead seeks to comprehend moral, social, and political life as expressed and embodied in specific conditions of life-practice. Here Hegel is viewed in opposition to Kant and Fichte and more in line with Herder and members of the historical school of law. He is also seen to anticipate Dilthey and the historical-hermeneutic sciences, the interpretive sociology of Mannheim and Simmel, Wittgenstein's linguistic contextualism, and current forms of neo-Aristotelian moral thought. On this account the theory of Objective Spirit is even presumed to accommodate elements of life experience inaccessible to general philosophical theorizing. Nor is it deniable that Hegel did seek to situate reason in ways that represent a challenge to his idealist predecessors. Not only did he claim that practical philosophy proceeds from existing social and cultural practices, he asserted as well that moral-political norms are expressive of the self-understanding of historical agents rather than the externally imposed constructions of philosophical reflection.

Yet none of this entails that Hegel advances an account of objective spirit freed from or in opposition to metaphysical claims and assumptions. On the contrary, his account represents a direct elaboration of these claims and assumptions. Objective spirit does connote an account of embodied freedom, yet such embodiment represents, first and foremost, not a narration of existing life-practices, but an affirmation of philosophical claims whose proper articulation entails objective manifestation. In particular, objective spirit represents a stage in a general philosophy of spirit meant to concretize the idea of freedom itself. At a purely conceptual level, the philosophy of spirit details the notion of free-

dom operative in the experience of the individual human subject. This account of freedom is the subject matter of the first sphere of the Philosophy of Spirit, namely, Subjective Spirit. Yet as the idea of freedom, understood as *bei-sich-selbst-sein-im-Anderen*, spirit cannot take the form just of individual subjective experience, nor can it denote an inward phenomenon juxtaposed to external reality. Articulating a distinctive principle of freedom, spirit instead requires for its own possibility embodiment in an objectively existent social world. The sphere of objective spirit is indeed “the world of spirit produced from within itself as a second nature” (*RPh* § 4). Objective spirit does attend to objectively embodied reason, yet such reason is not first and foremost the explication of the norms and values implicit in existent practices, but the elaboration of a notion of spirit that articulates both a concept of freedom construed through the logical-metaphysical notion of the identity of identity and difference and the achieved unity of substance and subjectivity.

This is not to say that the domain of objective spirit is a sphere of being wholly produced by spirit. Hegel may be seen by some to propound this type of generative idealism. His own view, however, may be more properly understood as a reconstructive idealism. As part of his general philosophy of reality, the theory of objective spirit does proceed from an analysis of claims, assumptions, and practices culled from existing societal phenomena. Hegel's *Realphilosophie* does have affinities with empirical social science, a point he himself signals in designating his *Philosophy of Right* as much a “positive science of right” as a theory of “natural law.”² Yet if Hegel is thus a social scientist, he is a unique sort, for whom empirical treatment of existing social life is not only compatible with a “speculative” philosophy of reality but completed through it. The task of a metaphysic of reality is precisely to restate empirically received claims so that they conform to the requirements of spirit and the notion of autonomous rationality connoted by it. The philosophy of reality elaborated within Objective Spirit is the product of a robust process of rational reconstruction exemplifying a view of metaphysics as the “diamond net into which everything is brought and thereby first made intelligible” (*Enc* § 246R).

The point may be made as well by considering the very objectivity of objective spirit. The doctrine of Objective Spirit is elaborated with attention to phenomena historically generated by existing social life. Yet what counts as objectivity proper are not the empirical phenomena themselves but the product resulting

2 The alternate title Hegel gives the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* is “Natural Law and Political Science (*Staatswissenschaft*) in Outline.” As he makes clear in the Griesheim transcript of the work, political science is meant to accommodate the “positive science of right” (*positive Rechtswissenschaft*) (Hegel 1973, p. 75).

from their rational reconstruction. It is with this restatement of simple existence (*Dasein*) from the standpoint of logical concepts (*Begriffe*) that the domain of objective spirit assumes the status of objectivity proper: true being or actuality (*Wirklichkeit*). In Hegel's dialectical account, reason objectifies itself in external reality only to the extent that reality is itself pruned of its adventitious attributes and reshaped in the form of an object proper, one adequate to an account of spirit.

Hegel's doctrine of Objective Spirit does attend, thus, to the rationality of existing socio-historical reality. Yet this is not to say, as does the anti-metaphysical reading, that Hegel is thereby advancing a merely situated or contextual account of reason; certainly he should not be said to inaugurate an account of historicism. His point is just the opposite. If Hegel integrates empirical historical considerations into his theory of objective spirit, it is not to historicize reason but to engage existing historical phenomena in a way conforming to the requirements of reason. No clearer statement of this process of "speculative" reconstruction can be found than in his treatment of world history itself, the final section in Objective Spirit. The object of a philosophy of world history is not "general reflections about world history...but world history itself" (Hegel 1975, p. 11, translation amended), for it is just in its rational reconstruction that empirical history acquires the meaning and rationality befitting a proper account of the matter in question (see Buchwalter 2012, ch. 12).

None of this, again, is to suggest that Hegel does not attend to the self-understanding of the agents of a particular community. He certainly does not impose on existing reality exogenous norms of rationality. On the contrary, a feature of spirit objectified is precisely its attention to the first-person perspective of those inhabiting a specific cultural context. Yet accommodation of this perspective is not an expression of the hermeneutic contextualism often invoked against emphatic notions of reason; instead, it is mandated by Hegel's very metaphysics of spirit. Attention to the subjective self-understanding of members of an existing community is itself entailed by a notion of spirit understood as the unity of substance and subjectivity. It is entailed as well by the idea of objective spirit. For Hegel, spirit is objectified when freedom is realized in the world. Yet freedom is so realized not simply, say, through the establishment of institutional structures that instantiate the principle of freedom. Proceeding from a notion of spirit also defined as that which is both in and for itself—"the most important point for the nature of spirit" (*WL GW* 21.15),³ Hegel claims that a community is fully free only when it also *knows itself* as free. Only when reality autochthonously gives

³ Quotations refers to the Miller translation (Works Cited: Hegel 1969).

expression to the self-reflexive agency of subjects does spirit assume full actuality. In its appeal to indigenous reality, Objective Spirit confirms rather than denies Hegelian metaphysics.

Granted, Hegel also characterized objective spirit as a type of second nature, wherein the concept of freedom is instantiated in empirically subsisting ethical relations—in “the existing (*vorhandenen*) world” (*RPh* § 142). As such, it takes the form of concretely existing morality or ethical life understood, in contradistinction to the abstractions of Kant’s *summum bonum*, as a “living good” (*RPh* § 142). Yet this is not to say that in the end Objective Spirit merely expresses an existing and historically specific set of cultural and ethical practices. Hegel’s position is not what Joachim Ritter, invoking Aristotle, calls an “institutional ethics,” a customary and tradition-based account of communal norms of conduct and action (Ritter 1982, p. 168 ff.). This view misrepresents the living good itself. The latter’s vitality consists in its construal of moral norms, not in abstract juxtaposition to the everyday experience and practices of moral actors, but as elements in their self-conscious agency. The good comes alive—it assumes living reality—only inasmuch as individuals reflectively endorse and embrace the norms of community and the social relations they entail. Objective Spirit, qua the living good, does express a second nature, but just in the way Hegel describes: as a “world of spirit produced from within itself.” Thus against merely contextual or historicist accounts, Hegel does not present an account of existing ethicality as simply the summation of practices and norms embodied in existing customs and received traditions. As the living good, ethicality assumes proper reality only to the extent that it instantiates the concept of spirit. It is in embodying the organic union of substance and subject—in assuming the form of a community that consciously wills its own commonality—that the good acquires objective reality.

Realized Freedom

To say, however, that Hegel’s theory of Objective Spirit should be understood, not simply as an account of historically situated practices and norms, but as an articulation of the general principle of spirit is not itself to affirm a “metaphysical” reading of his practical philosophy. Clearly the principles of externalization and embodiment entailed by the concept of spirit can themselves be construed non-metaphysically. This is the approach of Charles Taylor in his influential work *Hegel*. While committed to Hegel’s merit and contemporary relevance, he asserts that we can no longer appeal to his “quite dead” metaphysics or “logico-ontology” (Taylor 1975, p. 538). Instead, Hegel remains meaningful in part through his doctrine of expressivism. A doctrine shared by Hegel with some contemporaries

and relevant today with regard to theories of language and action, expressivism presents an account of realized human freedom that remains vital irrespective of the obsolescence of Hegel's general metaphysics.

In this section I question the adequacy of doctrine of expressivism as an account of Hegel's notions freedom, action, and self-realization (see Buchwalter 2012, ch. 6). As a general matter I do not question Taylor's success in presenting, with the doctrine of expressivism, a non-metaphysical rendering of Hegel's thought. I do argue, though, that just for this very reason he has failed to capture the meaning and purpose of Hegel's account of realized freedom and the concept of action associated with it. I develop this point by considering both Taylor's own account of the expressivist doctrine and the more explicit application to Hegel's practical philosophy it finds in the work of R. Pippin, who likewise promotes a non-metaphysical reading (in Pippin 2008).

To begin with, while Taylor is correct to recognize the centrality of self-realization in Hegel's conception of philosophy, he is wrong to construe it expressivistically. Self-realization for Hegel does not refer first and foremost to the activity of a subject externalizing itself in a foreign medium. This view is wrong because it imposes on Hegelian thought dualisms that are anathema to it. To speak of the self realizing itself in a foreign medium is to affirm the dichotomous understanding of self and world, subject and object, thought and being, Hegel was dedicated to surmounting. To be sure, Taylor does present expressivism as a doctrine of radical anti-dualism: the notion that the self realizes itself in an external medium is meant to overcome the rigid and polarized notions of self and world for which he criticizes enlightenment thought and culture. Nonetheless, by conceiving unity as a goal to be achieved, and in a world that stands over against the subject, Taylor remains committed to a view of reality whose basic structure, in a Hegelian account, is dualistic.

For his part, by contrast, Hegel espoused a conception of reality whose unitary structure was already, if not fully, presupposed. While it is true that a central focus of his theoretical philosophy is the problem of a subject-object unification, this process is conceived against the backdrop of a more fundamental philosophical monism within which unification—and, for that matter, differentiation—have meaning. Thus, the central conception of self-realization refers less to the process of a self forging an expressive unity of itself and an external world than to the means by which an already existent unity attains a more variegated, ramified and complete self-articulation. In a word, the structure of the Hegelian theory of self-realization is not externalization (*Entäußerung*) but interiorization (*Erinnerung*) (see Rosen 1982, p. 122–42)—the self-unfolding, self-reflection, and internal self-differentiation of an already existent reality.

A complete elaboration of this point would require detailed consideration of Hegel's conception of Geist, something that exceeds the scope of the present inquiry. However, the general point can be elucidated by examining two aspects of Taylor's account of Hegelian self-realization as expressivist externalization, both of which suffer from a failure to interpret Hegel's theory of action within the broader framework of his thought. First, the notion of self-realization as externalization misrepresents the teleological character of Hegel's conception of *Selbstverwirklichung*. Teleology for Hegel is not a theory of *external* purposiveness, the realization of aims in an external medium. Throughout his work he criticized this "vulgar" conception of purpose (*Gl&Wi* p. 171–81).⁴ It is, he writes in the Preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, a conception of teleology that has brought the notion of purpose "into disrepute" (*PhG* p. 12).⁵ The problem with this view is that it affirms dichotomies such as those between reason and reality, form and content, whereas on the Hegelian account they are intrinsically connected. His is a notion of *internal* teleology, one where purpose and rationality are immanent to reality itself. His concern, in other words, is not with the imposition of a form on a given content but the formal self-development of a given content—"the immanent development of the thing [*Sache*] itself" (*RPh* § 2). Far from suggesting that teleology is an activity brought to bear on reality, Hegel maintains that reality itself consists in its self-activity.

Second, an expressivist rendering of the notion of self-realization does insufficient justice to its character as a doctrine of freedom. Freedom is not understood by Hegel as the process of a subject's externalized expression or its attaining embodiment in external circumstances. In the Hegelian account this model is tantamount to a denial of freedom. In allowing that the subject is confronted by conditions that are not of its own making, the expressivist view both presupposes and perpetuates a heteronomous state of affairs; it precludes *ab ovo* the self-determination that for Hegel is presupposed in a complete account of autonomy. To do justice to the conception of freedom, it is necessary to surmount the dichotomous assumptions that infuse the expressivist framework. Freedom must be conceived not as the process of a subject externalizing itself in an alien medium, but rather an activity in which its conditions of activity are themselves a subjective creation, in which the subject is the author of its own content and objectivity. Full autonomy connotes an activity as the very process of "bringing forth its actuality" (*Enc* § 235), one that "does not need a material at hand

⁴ Quotations of *Faith and Knowledge* [*Gl&Wi*] refer to the Cerf/Harris translation (Works Cited: Hegel 1977a).

⁵ Citations of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* refer to the Miller translation (Works Cited: Hegel 1977b).

outside it in order to realize itself” (*Enc* § 163). Here, too, we can invoke the claim made in the Introduction to the *Philosophy of Right*, where Hegel presents the realm of actualized freedom as “the world of spirit produced from within itself as a second nature.” Realized freedom is to be understood not as the realization of reason in a world external to it, but as the presentation of reality, properly conceived, as an articulation of freedom itself.

The bearing these observations have on Hegel’s practical philosophy can be illustrated by considering his concept of action, detailed in the morality section of the *Philosophy of Right*. Doing so is instructive because the concept of action Hegel there elaborates has been construed by Pippin, also a proponent of the non-metaphysical reading, on the general model of expressive self-realization proposed by Taylor. Yet a proper understanding of this concept reveals that here, too, Hegel is committed to notions of agency and realized freedom informed by the structures of interiorization appropriate to a metaphysic of spirit, one predicated on the immanent process of substance becoming subject to itself.

For Pippin, Hegel’s theory of action represents an account of human purpose and intentions. On his view, intentions do not denote discrete *ex ante* mental states; nor is action itself the phenomenon of inner states exerting a causal effect on an external entity. Instead, it denotes a process through which agents shape and discover their intentions and themselves through engagement in and with the world. For Pippin, this expressivist reading finds its most distinctive articulation in Hegel’s account of a “social theory of agency” (Pippin 2008, p. 147), as the processes of self-understanding and self-discovery are best clarified with reference to the public norms and societal forms of recognition that give meaning and reality to subjective agency.

As a general matter much is correct in this analysis. Although Hegel does construe action with reference to subjective intentions and purposes, he rejects any merely introspective account of mental life; he claims further that any account of inner experience cannot be demarcated from external embodiment but depends on the latter for its meaning and reality. He asserts further that external conditions of agency are intertwined with robust notions of social and communal life.

It is questionable, however, if this warrants the conclusion that Hegel advocates a specifically expressivist conception of action. The contention here is rather that considerations of embodiment, objectification, and externalization, while certainly part of any Hegelian account of agency, are themselves components of a more basic process of inwardization meant to liberate subjectivity from external determination and in ways that enrich, consolidate, and vindicate its claims to autonomy. In particular, action—termed by Hegel the “expression of will as subjective or moral” (*RPh* § 113)—does represent a process by which the will lo-

cates itself in a world adequate to its own autonomy, but that very expectation mandates that agency also takes the form of an interiorization process wherein what the subject initially confronts as externally conditioned expressions of itself is progressively rearticulated as explicit self-positings. Indeed, it is only in such subjective reappropriation that the good—the desideratum of a dialectical account of action—attains objective reality.

Here I cannot rehearse the various steps in Hegel's notoriously complex discussion of agency in the morality chapter (see Buchwalter 2012, ch. 6). Instead, I will briefly reference the final and culminating moment in his account of morality: conscience (*Gewissen*). Conscience is important because it represents the highest expression of morality itself, combining a deontological concept of objective good with the subjective disposition to will the good. But it is also important as the highest expression of a form of action dedicated to actualizing the realized good. In conscience, termed by Hegel "action itself" (*PhG* p. 386), the activity of subjective self-determination is itself the realization of the good. The person of conscience is the individual who apprehends him or herself as a conscientious agent, and conscientious agency is itself the worldly realization of what is right and good. Conscience is the "infinite and inwardly knowing [*wis-sende*] subjectivity which determines its content within itself" (*RPh* § 128).

Appreciation of the nature of conscience makes clear the centrality of interiorization for Hegel's view of action. It is with conscience—"the total withdrawal into the self"—that Hegel fashions the mediation of moral self-determination and norms of right and good comprising action in its consummate form. Conscience thus affirms the point of agency itself: "what someone does must be considered not in its immediacy, but only as mediated through his inwardness and as a manifestation of it" (*RPh* § 112 A). It also reaffirms the "speculative" underpinnings of Hegel's account of practical philosophy, for which "[e]verything which arises in the ethical realm (*Sittlichkeit*) is produced (*hervorgebracht*) by this activity of spirit" (*RPh* § 138 A).

Hegel, to be sure, is also highly critical of the phenomenon of conscience. So long as it is construed from the standpoint of the individual moral subject, conscience can assume a host of forms—vanity, hypocrisy, and evil itself—inimical to a realized notion of the good. To avoid these problems, conscience must be restated in terms of objective conceptions of value, those deriving not from the will of the individual subject but from the communally accepted norms and principles connoted by ethical life. Yet acknowledgement of the dependency of human agency on institutional norms and public forms of recognition is not to say that Hegel's notion of action is an expressivist one after all. Here, too, inwardness and interiorization remain central to Hegel's account. While agency does depend on publicly recognized norms of conduct, these norms themselves

have meaning for agents only as far as they can acknowledge their application to the conditions of their lives. The domain of publicly shared norms attains full reality only in “the self-awareness (*Selbstgefühl*) of individuals” (*RPh* § 265 A). Proceeding from a concept of spirit understood as the unity of substance and subjectivity, Hegel claims that community fully exists only in the subjective endorsement of objective norms and values, even as those values are central to the characterization of what counts as legitimate agency.

Dialectics

Central to Hegel’s logical-metaphysical concerns is the concept of dialectics, arguably the centermost category in his account of philosophical reason. And like much in his thought this concept has also been subjected to criticism by those promoting the non-metaphysical reading of his practical philosophy. In some cases this takes the form of a rejection of the concept itself. Thus in a book on Hegel’s ethical thought, Allen Wood fingers dialectics as the defining principle of a system of metaphysical speculation devoid of merit and credibility (Wood 1990, p. 1–8). Others are critical less of the concept of dialectics itself than the logico-metaphysical articulation it finds in Hegel’s thought. This is the view of, *inter alia*, Habermas, who, reaffirming Marx’s goal of extracting a rational kernel from the mystical shell of Hegelian speculation, restates dialectic as a dialogical or communicative principle. Using Habermas’s position as a springboard, I consider in this section the dialogical or communicative reformulation of Hegel’s notion of dialectic. Here, too, I argue that the non-metaphysical rendering of Hegel’s thought obstructs its proper appreciation.

Habermas advanced the argument for a dialogical interpretation of Hegel’s dialectic in his essay “Labor and Interaction,” asserting that Hegelian dialectic must be understood as a movement that “reconstructs the suppression and reconstitution of the dialogue situation” (Habermas 1973, p. 147). Nor is this assertion without plausibility, as Hegel himself appears to affirm a dialogical account of dialectic. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, for instance, dialectic appears to be conceived as a process of recognitive social interaction. Calling attention to “the I that is We and the We that is I” (*PhG* p. 112), Hegel appears to link dialectical progression with dialogical accounts of social relations and identity formation (see Hyppolite 1971). Elsewhere in the same work Hegel apparently conjoins the dialectic of human development with modes of communicative interaction: “it is the nature of humanity to press onward to agreement with others; human nature only really exists in an achieved community of minds” (*PhG* p. 42).

In fact, however, dialogical renderings of Hegelian dialectic are problematic. In Hegel's view, dialectic is above all a logical-metaphysical category, not an anthropological or sociological one. It is not per se a principle of identity formation or of social reciprocity; it is a principle first and foremost for surmounting untenable dualisms while avoiding undifferentiated monism. This is not to say that dialogue and dialectic are incompatible. As Hegel's practical philosophy amply demonstrates, the principle of dialectic is core to explicating modes of communicatively based social relations. Still, dialectic is not itself a category of communicative interaction. If anything, the reverse is true. In Hegel's view human relations and, for that matter, natural relations, attain their dialectical character only when informed by the principles of dialectical theory. When Hegel presents a reciprocal view of the relationship of self and other, this is because social relations assume such form when viewed from a dialectical perspective, one based on the logical relationship of *bei-sich-selbst-sein-im-Anderen*. The closest thing to a dialogical account of self and other can be found in the Jena *Realphilosophie*, where Hegel formulates a notion of recognition free of the systemic requirements of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Yet even here the reciprocal process of universal and particular focuses not on the dialogical constitution of the self, but on processes more basic to Hegel's concept of spirit: on how an already constituted empirical ego subsumes its "natural" particularity to the requirements of autonomous rationality (see Siep 1979, p. 234–54).

True, the *Phenomenology* appears to allow for a dialogical interpretation of dialectic. The process leading to absolute knowledge may be viewed "as a process of communication between the writer-thinker and the readers" (Benhabib 1986, p. 46). Suggestive though this view is, however, it is not adequate to Hegel's core project in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Not only does he contend that the *Phenomenology of Spirit* rests on the same conception of method that informs his "systematic" writings; any strictly dialogical interpretation of it is undermined by the fact that its conclusion is known in advance to the philosopher. Certainly, Hegelian dialectic can be rendered in terms of a phenomenological dialogic. As one scholar has argued, "Hegel's method of a dialectical *reconstruction* of the given...can be transformed, qua dialogical logic of reflection, into an open dialogue between concept and experience" (Heinrichs 1981, p. 443 and *passim*). However, even he acknowledges this transformation is meaningful only if the dialectical logic of reflection is modified with a dialogical form foreign to Hegel's intentions.

Were one interested in locating a dialogical concept of dialectic, one might turn to Feuerbach, arguably the first to characterize dialectic explicitly as the dialogue of self and other. "The true dialectic is not a monologue of a solitary thinker with himself; it is a dialogue between I and thou" (Feuerbach 1966,

§62). But this is not the Hegelian conception. For Hegel, dialectic is not a phenomenological or sociological principle but a logical-methodological one. Marx characterized Hegelian dialectic as a principle of negativity rather than of dialogue (cf. Fulda 1974). Whether negativity fully captures the Hegelian conception is immaterial here. Where Marx is correct—this is his advance on Feuerbach—is the recognition that for Hegel dialectic is a category rooted above all in his logico-metaphysical assumptions. Indeed this point is acknowledged by Feuerbach himself when he presents his dialogical conception of dialectic in opposition to Hegel's position (cf. Wartofsky 1977).

Certainly dialectic as science can be linked with dialectic as dialogical life-practice. The work of Plato attests to precisely this conjunction—a point stressed by Hegel himself. Not only is Plato's notion of dialectic—oriented to surmounting oppositions of identity and difference, one and many, thought and being—inspired by the verbal exchange chronicled in the dialogues; the Platonic concept of truth expressed in dialectic derives from the structure of Socratic dialogue. Socratic dialogue is “the bringing of the universal in men to consciousness”—and this captures, in the form of “moral self-reflection,” the activity central to the conceptual movement of ideas (*VGPh* 2 p. 51 ff.).⁶ For Hegel, Plato's philosophy is “clearly expressed” in the structure of dialogue (*VGPh* 2 p. 12).

At the same time, Hegel does challenge Plato's conception of dialectic, and precisely owing to its identification with dialogue. As dialogue, dialectic lacks the necessity central to truth. Because dialogical dialectic commences arbitrarily and at uncertain starting points, because it proceeds unsystematically, and because it rarely arrives at conclusions, it lacks the rigor that the Platonic episteme defends (cf. *VGPh* 2 p. 16 ff.). The vagaries of dialogue in Plato's work reveals that the claims of truth are defensible only when distinguished from dialogue. A properly “scientific” concept of dialectic is defensible only if one “distinguish[es] what belongs to ordinary conception (*Vorstellung*). . . from the philosophic idea itself.” The dialogical “form is highly attractive,” and yet “we must not think, as many do, that it is the most perfect form in which to present Philosophy” (*VGPh* 2 p. 20, 14).

Dialogue could be identified with dialectic only if speech and rationality could be unequivocally equated. Hegel found this to be Plato's position. Plato considered it meaningful to speak of a “contingent form of speech, in which men of noble and unfettered nature conversed without other interest than that of the theory which is being worked out” (*VGPh* 2 p. 116). Indeed, Plato's “immanent critique” of the sophists was based on the assumption that speech is a tool

6 Citations to *VGPh* are to the Haldane/Simson translation (Works Cited: Hegel 1983).

not just for strategic self-interest but for attaining truth. For Hegel, however, this connection between speech and rationality, however plausible it once may have been, is no longer credible. In a world defined by market relations where individual value is understood largely in monetary terms, the Greek ideal of “men of noble and unfettered nature” engaging in disinterested communication is no longer tenable. When the good life can no longer be distinguished from the strategic mastering of life's necessity, “the contingent form of speech” becomes the category for the expression of non-public interests, even the institutionalization of the sophistry Plato thought could be avoided by equating dialogue with dialectic. In the modern world Plato's notion of subjective self-reflection and the conception of the unity of universal and particular are now defensible only with a concept of dialectic distinct from that of dialogue.

In this regard, Hegel's position bears greater resemblance to Aristotle's than Plato's. While sharing Plato's commitment to the social character of rationality, Aristotle maintained that science proper could not be equated with dialogue itself. The rhetorical vagaries surrounding Plato's dialogically conceived dialectic rendered impossible efforts to link dialectic with demonstration. Rhetorical sophistry is for Aristotle surmountable not by fashioning a true conception of dialogical rhetoric (dialectic), but by overcoming dialogue itself, by demarcating “analytics” from “topics.” To be sure, Hegel notes that Aristotle also contends that dialectic qua dialogue is not without place in a complete account of knowledge. Because it teaches the “many aspects under which an object” can be examined, dialectics in the Aristotelian account is “specifically suitable and requisite for the training of orators and for ordinary communication” (*VGPh* 2 p. 218). In addition, Aristotle allows that dialectics serves as a propaedeutic to science, not unlike the way that Hegel regards the *Phenomenology of Spirit* as an introduction to his Logic. Aristotle would have little in common with those analytic heirs who dismiss dialectics altogether. Nonetheless, the problems besetting Plato's position were sufficient for Aristotle, anticipating Hegel, to distinguish reason itself from a dialogically conceived notion of dialectic.

Naturally, Hegel does not share Aristotle's contention that demarcating linguistic practice from philosophy entails a repudiation of dialectic itself; nor does he follow Aristotle's separation of dialectics from science. With Plato, and against the view that prevailed from Aristotle to Kant, Hegel regards dialectic as central to analytical knowledge. Indeed, his notion of science is predicated on rehabilitating the concept of dialectic that Aristotle had banished from philosophical theory. Only with a dialectical logic can reason reflect on the assumptions that demonstrative knowledge dogmatically accepts as given. Without dialectic, analytic demonstration is itself incoherent: “once dialectic has been separated from proof, the notion of philosophical demonstration has been

lost” (*PhG* p. 40). Only with dialectic—only with a logical-metaphysical theory oriented to mediating oppositions—can one formulate a concept of method that addresses the substantive references which inevitably infuse formal considerations and which theory must include if it is not to rely on the unexamined assumptions it purports to reject. So long as science does not integrate into its own framework such substantive considerations, it remains gripped by the pre-scientific domain it seeks to overcome in contraposing analytics to dialectics.

Still, Hegel’s rehabilitation of dialectic is not a reaffirmation of the dialogical principle itself. In opposition to both Plato and Aristotle, and more so with Kant, Hegel maintains that dialectic is scientifically defensible only when demarcated from dialogue. Only when so conceived can dialectic serve philosophical theory. So long as dialectic remains tied to ordinary linguistic practice, it cannot advance the goal of demarcating reason from the vagaries of words and speech. Only when understood on the model of self-reflection articulated by a concept of spirit can dialectics assist analysis without succumbing to what the latter strives to avoid.

The salience of a non-dialogical account of dialectic for Hegel’s practical philosophy can be illustrated by returning to critical social theory, this time not with Habermas but his student Honneth. In his 2014 *Freedom’s Right* Honneth draws on Hegelian resources to fashion a philosophical reconstruction of modern society. In doing so he affirms, with Hegel, an account of ethical life informed by an intersubjective and communicative notion of social relations. Honneth departs from Hegel, however, in how he elaborates this account. For Honneth reconstruction proceeds by uncovering an originary intersubjectivity that, in quasi-Aristotelian fashion, informs social relations generally. By contrast, Hegel, opposed in any event to the naturalism he associates with philosophical anthropology, proceeds by endorsing modern subjective individualism while also claiming that the latter is unintelligible without developed modes of intersubjective social relations. He thereby displays a historical sensitivity arguably more nuanced than Honneth. But he also makes clear that practical philosophy proceeds, not through direct appeal to principles of dialogue and communication, but by deploying tools of dialectical analysis.

Conclusion

In the foregoing I have questioned non-metaphysical readings of Hegel’s practical philosophy, focusing on three core concepts: objective spirit, realized freedom, and dialectics. I have sought to indicate that these representative components of Hegel’s philosophy are best understood by accentuating ties to his

logico-metaphysical theory. But it is also the case that the contemporary significance of Hegel's practical philosophy can be illuminated in this manner. By way of conclusion I defend this point by briefly considering the relation of Hegel's metaphysics of spirit to his theory of ethical life, here again referencing Honneth's work (cf. Schweikard 2013).

In *The Pathologies of Individual Freedom: Hegel's Social Theory*, Honneth claims that a currently viable account of ethical life can be obtained only by dislodging it from Hegel's "now completely incomprehensible . . . ontological conception of spirit" and by referring instead to the recognitively conceived modes of communicative interaction Hegel only implicitly thematized in the *Philosophy of Right* (Honneth 2010, p. 4 and *passim*). The details of Honneth's suggestive interpretation cannot be addressed here. It suffices to assert, however, that Hegel's conception of spirit can indeed contribute to formulating a currently tenable conception of ethical life. If construed as the name for a reality that is internally reflexive, the concept of spirit underwrites at least four elements of a decidedly modern account of *Sittlichkeit*. It denotes a political community: 1) that is not only committed to but constituted through shared deliberation on common ends; 2) that is integrated not through substantive notions of a common good but through reflexive attention to the conditions of commonality itself; 3) whose explicit attention to the conditions of *shared* identity both presuppose and entail a differentiated and pluralistic account of societal life; and 4) that, in acknowledgement of the inability of any act of subjective reflection to ever make itself definitively an object of reflection, is shaped by a future-oriented and even fallible open-endedness.

In invoking Hegel's conception of spirit, I do not wish to suggest that it, any more than the logical-metaphysical theory of which it is a part, does not contain elements that are outdated or simply not credible. Nor do I wish to defend the view that his metaphysics entails a philosophical holism for which one element cannot be properly affirmed without affirming the system in its entirety (cf. Horstmann 1999). I do hope to have made clear, however, that on several counts appeal to elements of his logico-metaphysical theory is central to appreciating the meaning and ongoing value of Hegel's practical philosophy.

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Giacomo Rinaldi

The Metaphysical Presuppositions of Hegel's Philosophy of Self-Consciousness

Introduction

The correct interpretation, critical appropriation and further development of Hegel's philosophy in the contemporary age have been remarkably hindered by the spread of openly anti-metaphysical philosophical trends such as historical materialism, logical empiricism, neo-Kantianism, historicism and pragmatism. The historiographical perspectives influenced by these schools generally oscillate between the peremptory rejection of Hegel's thought as the last evolutionary stage of western metaphysics (Heidegger, Popper)¹ and more conciliatory attempts at distinguishing in it the obsolete metaphysical or "mystical shell" from a "rational kernel" held instead to be valid and up to date. Thus Marx and Engels could set the "scientific" value of Hegel's dialectic against the "reactionary" tendency of his "system";² Croce could extol his historical sense and dialectical thought while rejecting his metaphysical and "theologizing" claims;³ and Findlay could emphasize the "empirical" richness of Hegel's concrete analyses of spirit's historical development, which would of themselves bear witness to the essentially "anti-metaphysical" character of his thought.⁴ The negative outcome of such extrinsic and prejudiced readings of Hegel's philosophy has been not only a number of more or less serious misunderstandings of it but even its transformation into one of the crucial constituents of contemporary anti-metaphysical thought. In this way, Hegel's philosophy has been ascribed a purpose and finality that effectively contradict *in toto* both its innermost "spirit" and Hegel's explicit declarations. On the other hand, by thus making Hegel's philosophy, too, directly or indirectly responsible for that "end of metaphysics" which, as contemporary anti-metaphysical thought was finally bound to acknowledge, ultimately coincides with the death of philosophy itself, the anti-metaphysical school has effec-

1 Cf. Heidegger 1950, p. 105–92. About K. Popper and his unsuccessful polemics against Hegelianism see Christensen 1989: "A Hegelian Critique of Popper's Theory of Objective Knowledge," p. 101–13.

2 Cf. Marx 1968: "Nachwort zur zweiten Ausgabe," pp. 27–8; Engels 1962, p. 265 ff.

3 Cf. Croce 1967, p. 5–51; 1976, p. 140–53. For a Hegelian critique of Croce's interpretation of Hegel see Rinaldi 2012a, II, p. 167–84: "A Few Critical Remarks on Croce's Historicism."

4 Cf. Findlay 1958, p. 346–54.

tively contributed to discrediting it in the eyes of the last advocates of metaphysics.⁵

In contrast with this unhappy, and eventually self-undermining trend of contemporary philosophy, we nowadays witness in the English speaking world, where the sway of logical empiricism's anti-metaphysical attitude has been most widespread and durable, an unexpected and comforting revival of metaphysical interpretations of Hegel's thought. Already in 1954, in his admirable work *Nature, Mind and Modern Science*,⁶ Errol Harris paved the way for the development of an original "holistic" metaphysics plainly influenced by Hegel's objective idealism. More recently, the brilliant commentaries on Hegel's *Logic* and *Philosophy of Religion* by Robert Williams,⁷ Stephen Houlgate⁸ and Robert Wallace⁹ have suitably highlighted its peculiar "speculative nucleus." In this article, I shall develop further a metaphysical interpretation of Hegel's *Logic*, previously expounded and defended by me in books and essays,¹⁰ by showing that

5 This is especially the case with today's supporters of Thomistic and Augustinian metaphysics or Christian philosophers such as Ivan Il'in. For an outline and critique of anti-Hegelian polemics by Thomists and Augustinians see Rinaldi 2010a, p. 684–93. About Il'in's metaphysical theism, see P. T. Grier's thoughtful Introduction to his translation of Il'in's Hegel commentary: *The Philosophy of Hegel as a Doctrine of the Concreteness of God and Humanity* (Grier 2010, I, p. ix–xciv).

6 Cf. Harris 1954, '65, '83, '87 and 2000. On Harris's Hegelianism cf. Rinaldi 1983; Grier 1989; Rinaldi 1998, p. 141–53: "Appendice. Incidenza del 'sapere speculativo' sulla filosofia contemporanea"; Rinaldi 2010b, p. 302–6; Rinaldi 2012a, II, p. 185–204: "The Identity of Thought and Being in Harris's Interpretation of Hegel's *Logic*."

7 Cf. Williams 2012, p. 16–26. For a recent, extensive discussion of this book see Rinaldi 2014, p. 119–45.

8 Cf. Houlgate 2006, p. 119: "Even though Hegel's *Logic* is written in the wake of Kant's critical turn, ...it remains a metaphysical or ontological text. Yet the *Logic* presents a new, modern metaphysics that departs in certain significant ways from pre-Kantian metaphysics as Hegel conceives it"; and p. 140: "the categories articulated in the *Logic*—including those of 'reflexivity' and 'concept'—are forms of *being* as well as categories of thought. Speculative logic is accordingly not merely transcendental but ontological logic."

9 R. Wallace 2005, p. xxxi: "The tendency of commentators on Hegel's ethical thinking to avoid his controversial philosophical theology, along with his idealism and metaphysics in general, has prevented them from appreciating much of what he has to offer." The Hegel interpretation outlined by Wallace in this book has given rise to an interesting controversy between him and R. Williams about the most appropriate way of formulating the crucial Hegelian concept of the True Infinite. Cf. Williams 2010–11a, p. 89–122; Wallace 2010–11, p. 123–35; Williams 2010–11b, p. 137–52. For a detailed analysis and critical evaluation both of Wallace's book and of the ensuing controversy cf. Rinaldi 2015, forthcoming.

10 See Rinaldi 1987a, p. 52–62; 1987b, p. 127–36; 1989–90, p. 63–104; 1992; 1994, esp. II, p. 83–99: "Adorno e Hegel"; 1998, esp. p. 61–83: "Critica della riforma gentiliana della di-

the immanent structure and process of a crucial conceptual determination (*Begriffsbestimmung*) of his Philosophy of Spirit as self-consciousness is determined from beginning to end by a set of metaphysical presuppositions already explicated and justified in the *Science of Logic*.

The philosophical interest of this topic is self-evident. Hegel's theory of self-consciousness—namely, the consciousness of self that every individual possesses before and independently of his possible relation to the Infinite, the Absolute, the Divine—constitutes indeed one of the basic elements of the anti-metaphysical interpretations of Hegelianism. As Jean Hyppolite rightly observed,¹¹ the peculiar character of that theory is that it neither conceives the human subject as a (material or spiritual) “thing” (*res*), nor as the passive consciousness of an already-made object, but as sensible activity, labor, and social praxis that model and transform external nature. Just as in Marx's anthropology, the human generic essence (*Gattungswesen*) thus becomes identified with sensible need and its satisfaction through labor; and, just as in pragmatism, the human being becomes aware of objective reality only in and through sensible praxis aimed at satisfying subjective desire. Moreover, Hegel's analysis of recognitive self-consciousness not only highlights the genesis of social relations, showing that the existence of a singular, isolated self is only a contradictory abstraction, but also stresses the inevitably conflicting character of their relations. How not to see, then, in his theory of self-consciousness the immediate antecedent of two well-known Marxist theses—namely, that man is a generic, i.e., social essence, and that class struggle is the engine of world-history? What these abstractly “humanistic” interpretations of Hegel's theory of self-consciousness fail to understand is that the unquestionable analogy of its subject-matter with the topics favored by Marxism and pragmatism cannot and must not make us lose sight of the radical difference, or rather opposition, between the real meaning and final aim of Hegel's philosophy, on the one hand, and the corresponding conceptions outlined by contemporary anti-metaphysical thought, on the other.

In the first section, I clarify Hegel's speculative concept of metaphysics, the features it shares with the concept of metaphysics prevailing in the history of western philosophy, and the features that distinguish Hegel's concept. In the second section I sketch Hegel's theory of self-consciousness. In the third section I contend that the formal structure and dialectical movement of the whole figure

alettica hegeliana”; 2004, p. 95–101; 2005, p. 77–92; 2012a; 2012c, p. 31–50; 2012d; 2014b, p. 18–43; and 2014c, p. 35–82.

¹¹ Hyppolite 1946, p. 141–2.

(*Gestalt*) of self-consciousness turn out to be plausible only if one admits the truth of a set of metaphysical presuppositions unfolded in the *Science of Logic*.

I

Metaphysics, Hegel asserts in § 27 of the 1830 *Encyclopedia*, is the science of the objects of reason (*Vernunftgegenstände*) or, to use Aristotle's words, the science of the first causes and principles of being, i.e., of the whole of reality: the soul, as the totality of subjective phenomena; the universe, as the totality of objective phenomena; and God, as the absolute totality, the unity of subject and object, of thought and being. In § 1 Hegel has already stated that with metaphysics and religion, (speculative) philosophy has in common its object, namely "Truth, in that supreme sense in which God and God only is the Truth." In § 35 A, he adds that the cosmological questions discussed by metaphysics "are questions of the highest importance"; in § 36 A, that "a reason-derived knowledge of God is the highest problem of philosophy." In the Introduction to the *Science of Logic* Hegel maintains that speculative logic must not be confused either with Aristotle's empty formal logic or with Kant's abstractly subjective transcendental logic. It rather coincides with (rational) theology itself, for it is "*the presentation of God in his eternal essence before the creation of nature and finite spirit*" (WL GW 21.34; TWA 5:44). According to the traditional conception of metaphysics, rational theology is one of its particular disciplines. It is no wonder, then, that the deduction of categories carried out in the *Encyclopedia* Logic begins with the declaration that the logical determinations "may be looked upon as definitions of the Absolute or metaphysical definitions of God" (*Enc* § 85).¹² In Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*¹³ finally, the exposition of determinate religion and of absolute religion itself (i.e., Christianity) is divided into three main sections: the Metaphysical Concept of God, Representation, and Cult. In open polemic against the fideistic and irrationalistic conceptions of religion, in fact, he emphatically contends that the metaphysical idea of God constitutes not only the peculiar object of philosophical knowing, but also the moving soul of any genuine historical religion. Religious faith and metaphysical knowing, mystical experience ("inner revelation") and rational thought, then, far from undermining each other, turn out to be in the last resort identical

¹² Citations refer to the Wallace translation (Works Cited: Hegel 1974).

¹³ Citations from *VRel* refer to TWA vols 16–17 (Works Cited: Hegel 1969b), in particular *VRel* I, p. 305 ff.; II, p. 16 ff., 205 ff.; and to the Jaeschke ed. (Works Cited: Hegel 1995), II p. 5 ff., 34 ff., 155 ff., 290 ff.; III p. 108 ff.

—or, rather, faith is the immediate, intuitive certainty of that absolute truth that metaphysics then explicates in a reflective, discursive and systematic way.

However, as the preceding quotations unquestionably show, for Hegel what is endowed with preeminent philosophical relevance is not only the object of metaphysics, i.e., the ideas of Reason. The same is the case with the epistemological principle on which it grounds the intrinsic possibility of the knowledge of these ideas, namely the identity of thought and being. It is, indeed, a peculiar tenet of metaphysical thought, from Parmenides and Spinoza to Leibniz and Wolff, that the knowledge of the inner essence of objective reality (*einaí, Sein, Wirklichkeit*) cannot be provided by sensible intuition or imagination, but only by pure thought (*noēsis, Denken*) or the pure concept (*eidōs, Begriff*). Thus, what thought evidently intuits as being furnished with objective, i.e., universal and necessary, validity coincides *eo ipso* with the essence, structure and laws of objective reality: “*ordo et connexio idearum idem est ac ordo et connexio rerum*” (Spinoza, *Ethica* II, Prop. 7). Although Hegel does not fail to point out also the limits of the traditional formulations of this principle, which stress only the identity of thought and being at the expense of their no less essential difference and dynamical mediation,¹⁴ he nevertheless sees in it a paramount achievement of philosophical thought, which Kant's critical philosophy wrongly rejected for no other reason than his *dogmatic* faith in the alleged original evidence of sense-perception.¹⁵

The unambiguous clarity and full consistency of Hegel's vindication of metaphysical thought makes it difficult to understand why interpretations such as Findlay's, which, in contrast, emphasize its alleged “anti-metaphysical empiricism,” can have arisen and prospered. Not even the power of the contemporary anti-metaphysical *Zeitgeist*, which ineluctably tends to model the minds of the commentators of classical thinkers according to the hermeneutic and critical schemas favored by it, seems to be able to account for the success of such extravagant contentions. But since nothing is purely casual in spirit's historical development, there must be a plausible ground and explanation also for these readings. The explanation can be found in the external articulation of a section of Hegel's Introduction to the *Encyclopedia*, the theory of the “three attitudes to objectivity” (*Enc* § 26–78). The gap between ordinary consciousness' viewpoint and that of speculative logic is indeed so deep as to induce its author to try to bridge

¹⁴ Cf. *VRel* II, p. 412–21 (“*Vorlesungen über die Beweise vom Dasein Gottes. Zehnte Vorlesung*”).

¹⁵ Cf. *Enc* § 28: “This metaphysical system took the laws and forms of thought to be the fundamental laws and forms of things. It assumed that to think a thing was the means of finding its very self and nature: to that extent it occupied higher ground than the Critical Philosophy which succeeded it.”

it through a summary reconstruction of the history of philosophical thought. As was already the case with the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (with the difference that in this work the itinerary followed by consciousness covers the whole evolution of human culture), the *Encyclopaedia* Introduction should enable the reader to get rid of the prejudices of ordinary consciousness, and thus raise himself to the viewpoint of speculative logic. It is divided into three sections: 1) Metaphysics (*Enc* § 6–36); 2) Empiricism (*Enc* § 37–9) and Critical Philosophy (*Enc* § 40–60); 3) Immediate Knowing (*Enc* § 61–70). In this tripartition, metaphysics does constitute the beginning of philosophy's historical evolution; but such a priority is, as is the case with every genuine dialectical development, only the consequence of metaphysics' limitations. For the historical-temporal, or abstractly subjective, beginning of thought's process is just the opposite of its substantial, absolute principle. From this viewpoint, metaphysics is the first stage of that process only because it is the most ingenuous (*unbefangen*) and imperfect one. Despite its openly negative and anti-philosophical bent, Empiricism therefore constitutes a progress with respect to metaphysics, since Empiricism can vindicate the certainty of finite existence and subjective consciousness only because the attempt carried out by metaphysics to know rationally objective truth has been (at least partially) unsuccessful. Is this not a convincing proof of the fact that, despite his aforementioned declarations, Hegel's thought is more of a development or completion of Empiricism and Critical Philosophy than an innovative and original kind of metaphysics? On the other hand, some anti-metaphysical commentators¹⁶ have pointed out that the concept of the Absolute, which constitutes the peculiar object of metaphysics because it translates, as it were, into philosophical language the fundamental religious representation of God, is deduced, developed and criticized by Hegel in the *Science of Logic* at the end of the Doctrine of Essence, which, far from unfolding the highest and most concrete thought-determinations (*Denkbestimmungen*), would only show the inner contradictoriness of the categories of abstract and finite thought.

Hegel's conception of metaphysics thus seems to get entangled in a knot of contradictions which, should they remain unsolved, risk undermining the inner consistency of his thought. Yet I believe that a solution—not illusory or merely verbal, but a real and satisfactory one—can be found by carefully re-reading these Hegelian passages (*Enc* § 26–30). Metaphysics, generally speaking, is the science of the objects of Reason. However, its scientific purpose can be car-

¹⁶ Cf. de Vos 2010, p. 315–22, and my reply to his critique, which is grounded on a radically anti-metaphysical, neo-Kantian Hegel interpretation, in Rinaldi 2012a, p. 139–63: “Skeptizismus und Metaphysik bei Hegel.”

ried out in two radically different ways. The first is that of “old metaphysics” (*vormalige Metaphysik*) which, identifying philosophical knowing with the reflection of the finite understanding, is “the view which abstract understanding takes of the objects of reason” (*Enc* § 27). The second way is that which, although it does not deny the necessary epistemological role played by the finite understanding, conceives it as a subordinate and ultimately contradictory faculty of the mind. It holds that Reason's objects can be successfully known only by speculative thought, i.e., by reason itself. The most complete historical realization of old metaphysics is the Leibnizian-Wolffian system, which became the target of Kant's critique, but it surfaces in the entire history of philosophy. Other instances of this metaphysics mentioned by Hegel are Scholastic philosophy and Cartesian dualism. Speculative philosophy obviously coincides with Hegel's philosophy but it does not exhaust itself in it. Hegel does not hesitate to regard the thought of Plato and Aristotle, too, as largely speculative, and to find genuinely speculative concepts such as that of pure self-consciousness in Kant's and Fichte's thought as well. Hence the metaphysics that fails its objective, thus giving rise to Empiricism, is only the metaphysics worked out by the finite understanding. The metaphysics articulated by speculative reason, to the contrary, not only does not succumb to the empiricist (Humean), Kantian, or intuitionist (Jacobian) critiques of metaphysics. It is rather legitimized as the only true “attitude to objectivity” precisely by its explication of the insuperable contradictions of Empiricism, Critical Philosophy and Immediate Knowing.

Hegel devotes extensive and profound treatments to both the criticism of the finite understanding and the systematic explication of speculative reason. In the first place, the finite understanding affirms, on the one hand, the identity of thought and being, but, on the other, it pits the cognitive activity of the thinking subject against objective truth or reality, which it conceives as originally external and transcendent to the subject. Their relation thus takes the shape of thought's passive *adaequatio* to extra-mental reality, a correspondence that could be only ascertained through comparison. This, however, is impossible in principle, because such a comparison would presuppose the possibility of directly knowing both terms of the relation, whereas the external object, as such, does not fall within the process of knowing and is therefore unknowable in principle. By contrast, since speculative philosophy negates the reality of the finite, it also negates the existence of insuperable limits to thought. This latter therefore, as infinite activity, posits, produces, or creates all possible objects in the course of its immanent self-development. Thinking therefore possesses in itself, in the inner *coherence* of the thought-determinations it unfolds, the original criterion of objective truth.

Secondly, traditional metaphysics in its Scholastic version unduly limits the validity of the principle of the identity of thought and being in another regard. The thought-determinations it posits are held by it to be really objective and not mere abstract possibilities only if they conform to the given of religious representations. The latter would provide us with a revelation of reality's objective essence that is truer, more profound and more trustworthy than the rational knowledge produced by pure thought. This, however, implies that thought is conceived by Scholastic metaphysics as a merely possible but not real being. Yet a merely possible being is in truth a not-being. It is a self-contradictory abstraction. The identity of thought and being is thus negated by old metaphysics at the very moment in which it is affirmed. Speculative reason, by contrast, constitutes itself as a presuppositionless knowing, which therefore criticizes and overcomes also the alleged immediacy of religious representations. Far from drawing from these the warrant of its truth, it alone can guarantee the objective truth of religious faith and dogmas, freeing them from those empirical, contingent and contradictory elements that are the inevitable effect of the abstract subjectivity of representation's epistemological element.

Thirdly, the activity of the finite understanding is essentially analytical and classifying in character. It divides the immediately given (which it dogmatically draws from sense-perception through abstraction—see *Enc* § 26—thus violating once again the principle of the identity of thought and being) into a manifold of particular concepts (e.g., being, substance, cause, effect, form, matter, etc.), each of which, by the principle of non-contradiction, is identical only with itself and different from all others. Yet in so doing the understanding unwittingly degrades the pure concept's essential universality to a particular determination. As such, this determination is contingent and abstractly subjective. Hence it lacks the (absolute) universality and (rational) necessity which alone could warrant its objective validity. Speculative reason instead rejects the principle of non-contradiction (or rather, its strong version, which attributes to it not only formal-analytical but also ontological significance), setting against it the principle of the actual unity of opposites (*coincidentia oppositorum*). Thought cannot think being if it does not think a determinate, particular concept; in its determinacy, however, the totality of its object is implicated; consequently, it is not only particular but is also the universal, the absolute whole expressed in a particular form. The immanence of the universal in the particular allows the deduction, or rather the dialectical development, of the latter from the former, thus furnishing the required proof of its objective validity. What is originally true is only the Universal, the Whole, the Absolute; but the particular concept itself, insofar as it can be deduced from it, is necessarily connected with it, thus sharing its original truth.

Finally, by dogmatically holding to the allegedly absolute truth of the principle of non-contradiction and therefore rejecting the actual unity of opposites, the old metaphysics must necessarily negate also that identity of being and not-being, of coming-to-be and passing-away, which constitutes the logical essence of becoming. It therefore conceives the Absolute, God, and the substance of the human spirit as an immobile, static entity, which is originally all that it can be (*ens realissimum*). This entity would thus exclude from itself not only all negations, contradictions and imperfections but also the possibility of overcoming them in the Absolute's immanent process through the infinite affirmation arising from the negation of such immediate negativity. Speculative reason, to the contrary, by affirming as its general principle the actual unity of opposites, can also grant the reality of that particular unity of being and not-being which constitutes the essence of becoming, of process, of spirit's creativity. The metaphysical principle of the identity of thought and being thus achieves in speculative philosophy a new significance and content: it is no longer an empty analytical proposition, asserting their immediate, static coincidence by excluding from their identity the moment of their difference, but, on the contrary, is an *a priori* synthetic judgment, in which the identity of thought and being is not immediate (what is immediate, rather, is their difference), but the result of thought's infinite self-mediation.

As to the second argument against the metaphysical interpretation of Hegel's thought – namely, that the fundamental metaphysical conception of the Absolute is discussed and criticized in the Doctrine of Essence, and thus is implicitly distinguished from the principle of speculative logic, the pure Concept or Idea – one can easily reply that it is based on a mere misunderstanding. For in that passage of the *Science of Logic*, Hegel does not expound and criticize the concept of the Absolute as such, but only Spinoza's conception of the Absolute as substance, which he considers (maybe not wholly correctly)¹⁷ as a product of the metaphysics of the finite understanding. Hegel sets against Spinoza's Absolute not the alleged reality of finite thought or sense-perception, but the higher reality and truth of the Absolute as Idea or spirit. Moreover, in the subsequent *Encyclopedia Logic* the section entitled "The Absolute" no longer appears in the theoretical structure of the Doctrine of Essence.

I wish to conclude this comparison between traditional metaphysics and Hegel's speculative philosophy by asserting that the latter criticizes and over-

17 A strong case for the genuinely speculative character of Spinoza's philosophy itself, to which Hegel's interpretation as a static metaphysics of abstract identity would not do justice, is made by E. Harris in his Spinoza commentary: Harris 1973, p. 50ff. See also my Introduction to my Italian translation (Harris 1991, p. 19–21 and 39ff.).

comes the former not because it shares the empiricist, historicist or relativistic orientation of contemporary anti-metaphysical thought, but just for the *opposite* reason—namely, the intrinsic *inconsistency* of the finite understanding, which, by affirming the principle of the identity of thought and being, claims to have raised itself above sense-perception, imagination and contingency, whereas, in truth, it more or less hiddenly relapses into them. Hegelianism, then, rejects the traditional metaphysics of being and the transcendent God not because—as the supporters of anti-metaphysical interpretations suggest—it more or less covertly embraces a kind of Neo-Kantian epistemology or relativistic hermeneutics, but because it grounds a new, original and more consistent metaphysics, which B. Spaventa suitably called “metafisica del pensare”¹⁸ and R. Williams no less correctly construes today as a “panentheistic” theology or “process metaphysics.”¹⁹

II

For us, the phenomenological figure of self-consciousness arises from the dissolution of the external relation between subject and object, which characterizes consciousness’ viewpoint when consciousness comes to realize that the object it immediately distinguishes from itself is nothing other than itself—or rather: a “representation,” namely, a constitutive element of the I (“a member in the system of what I myself am”: *Enc* § 424 A).²⁰ For self-consciousness itself, the unity of subject and object is instead an immediate state, involving the externality of their relation and thus reproducing the difference of consciousness in the sphere of self-consciousness. Self-consciousness is therefore pervaded by an essential contradiction between its concept (the identity of subject and object) and its reality (the difference of consciousness). Its immanent development is nothing other than the series of its attempts at resolving this contradiction. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Self-consciousness is divided into the figures of Appetite, Recognitive Self-consciousness, Stoicism, Skepticism and the Unhappy Con-

18 Cf. Spaventa 1972, p. 29. For a critical assessment of Spaventa’s metaphysical logic, cf. Rinaldi 1992, § 50, p. 396–403.

19 Cf. Williams 2012, p. 15: “Hegel’s speculative theology is best understood not as pantheism, but as panentheism. Hegel himself does not use this term. Nevertheless panentheism is a unity-in-difference that preserves the difference and fulfills the requirement that the difference be determined in a way that preserves the community of spirit with spirit”; see also p. 23, 261–2.

20 Citations refer to the Wallace/Miller translation (Work Cited: Hegel 1971).

sciousness (*PhG* p. 137–77).²¹ In the Philosophy of Spirit, this division is reduced to three conceptual determinations: Appetite, Recognitive Self-consciousness, and Universal Self-consciousness (cf. *Enc* § 424–39). These correspond to the three moments of the logical Concept—singularity, particularity and universality—but in reverse order. From the viewpoint of systematic order, the *Encyclopaedia* version does seem preferable; but in order to understand fully the real significance of the single transitions from one figure to another the resort to the more detailed text of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is indispensable.

As consciousness, self-consciousness presupposes the reality of an external object; as self-consciousness, it negates the latter in and through itself. The negation of the external object, insofar as it still remains abstractly subjective, is appetite, i.e., desire; and desire's realization occurs through the consumption of its object. The unity of subject and object produced in this way is the satisfaction of appetite. Yet as a satisfaction of immediate self-consciousness, which as such is sensible, singular, and exclusive (*Enc* § 426), appetite is only a “negative,” “transient” and “destructive” activity of mind (*Enc* § 428). It thus shares the destiny of all finite things, namely, to negate themselves, perish, and thus pass over into an other. Each satisfaction therefore leaves room once again for appetite, which seeks a new satisfaction, and so on. The spurious infinity of the *progressus in infinitum* thus taking place in the process of self-consciousness can and must be overcome through the transition to the subsequent figure, recognitive self-consciousness.

In the satisfaction of appetite, the identity of subject and object is posited: the object is also a subject. Hence it must not be consumed or destroyed, as was the case with the object of appetite, but rather “recognized” for what it is—namely, a self-consciousness endowed with intrinsic value. In this sphere, then, self-consciousness' immanent unity splits up into two self-consciousnesses, thus positing the moment of the Concept's particularity. But the particular is, as such, the negation of the universal, the splitting up of the whole, and thus is potentially contradictory. Recognitive self-consciousness, then, is a phenomenological figure no less contradictory than appetite, and the process of recognition is nothing other than the development of that contradiction. As immediate and particular, self-consciousness sets itself not only against another self-consciousness, but also against itself as other than itself—namely, as a sensible bodily (*leiblich*) being (cf. *Enc* § 431). Self-consciousness can thus realize its universality and self-identity only by negating the immediate particular life in itself and in the other, thus showing to itself and the other that its physical existence is

21 Citations refer to *TWA* 3 (Works Cited: Hegel 1970a).

not essential to it. This occurs through a conflict between the two self-consciousnesses, in which each risks its life. In so doing, self-consciousness aims at being recognized by the other self-consciousness as universal and self-identical, namely, as something more than a contingent and perishable existence. Yet the conflict cannot come to an end with the “abstract” annihilation (death) of the competitors because survival is a necessary condition of the recognition to which they aspire (*Enc* § 432–3). The conflict must therefore end with a winner and a loser: the former is the master, who, by accepting the death risk, has proved his freedom and self-identity, and is recognized as such by the other self-consciousness. This latter becomes his slave, who, in order to survive, renounces his recognition by the master as a free, self-identical self-consciousness, and is therefore reduced by the master to a mere condition or instrument of his physical existence. This is the phenomenological genesis of original social relations. These are then relations of one-sided dependence and servitude. It would seem *prima facie* that at least the master has realized his freedom; but in fact his existence is no less dependent and contradictory than that of the slave. For insofar as the master does not recognize the slave as a free self-consciousness, and treats him as a mere object instrumental in the satisfaction of his natural needs, he plainly restores that external relation to its other that characterizes appetite. The master satisfies his needs through the slave, but his satisfactions are “egoistic” and “transient.” Hence he does not actualize that universality and self-identity which he had vainly tried to achieve through the conflict with the other self-consciousness. The slave, on the contrary, stands in a relation of one-sided dependence on his master without being recognized by him. However, insofar as he recognizes the master’s will as his own, the slave renounces his own egoistic will and the satisfaction of his natural needs, and through labor gives form to the natural object instead of simply consuming it. The slave therefore executes in himself that very negation of immediate existence which the master had unsuccessfully tried to achieve through the acceptance of the death risk. However, mere obedience to the master’s will does not suppress the slave’s dependence on him. Theirs remains therefore a contradictory relation, which can be resolved only when the will the slave obeys is no longer the arbitrary one of a singular individual, but “the rational will [...] in and for itself” (*Enc* § 435 A),²² i. e., the will of Absolute Spirit. Through obedience to this universal will, the particularity of recognitive self-consciousness is overcome, thus giv-

22 “This servile obedience forms only the *beginning* of freedom, because that to which the natural individuality of self-consciousness subjects itself is not the truly universal, rational will which is in and for itself, but the single, contingent will of another person.”

ing rise to the subsequent phenomenological figure of universal self-consciousness.

This differs from recognitive self-consciousness because it overcomes first the one-sidedness and then the particularity of recognition. I recognize the other as a universal, free, independent *I* just as the other recognizes me as such. The other and I are then both, as *Is*, universal self-consciousnesses: in this sense, we are identical. But the other *I*, as other, is different from me. By recognizing the other, then, I at once affirm myself (as identical with him) and negate myself (because the other is, as such, not who I am). As concrete instances of this kind of self-consciousness Hegel suitably mentions forms of intersubjective relations such as love, friendship, patriotism, familial piety and the longing for fame and honors. More generally, the whole sphere of Ethicality, insofar as it unifies into a single, substantial whole a multiplicity of individuals, classes and institutions, presupposes that activity of “symmetrical” recognition which takes place in the ambit of universal self-consciousness.

Even this phenomenological figure, however, is undermined by a contradiction. On the one hand, feelings such as the longing for honors and fame do not necessarily have a substantial content: besides glory there is also vainglory, besides deserved honors there are also the unsubstantial (*gehaltleer*: *Enc* § 436) ones. On the other hand, thanks to their reciprocal recognition both self-consciousnesses are at once identical and different; but their difference (*Unterschied*), insofar as it is determined only by the relation of being-other, is a mere diversity (*Verschiedenheit*), i.e., an external, in-itself-indeterminate difference. When I distinguish the other from myself only as another, I posit between the two of us only an external, reiterative, quantitative difference: a difference, Hegel says, that “is no difference” (*Enc* § 423 A). Self-consciousness can therefore achieve concrete reality and self-identity only by positing itself as a systematic totality of internal relations, one whose differences are not merely external but qualitative or rather essential. This occurs only in the subsequent figure of reason (*Vernunft*), which is nothing other than the realization of the absolute Idea in the element of self-consciousness. In the sphere of (speculative) reason, the otherness inherent in symmetrical relations of recognition is sublated, and both its terms—the *I* and the other—“fade away” (*sich auflösen*) into a higher reality.²³

23 Cf. *Enc* §437 A: “It is precisely this identity of subjectivity and objectivity that constitutes the universality now attained by self-consciousness and which overlaps or overarches [*übergreift*] these two sides of particularities which are resolved in it.”

III

Hegel's philosophy of self-consciousness, as just outlined, reconstructs a spiritual process which falls completely within the limits of man's finite and immediate existence, the essential moments of which are natural need, sensible praxis (labor) and social relations (intersubjectivity). The pure activity of rational thought and the problem of the reality of its absolute object—the ideas of reason or the essence of the intelligible world—are not yet explicitly dealt with in the philosophy of self-consciousness.²⁴ It is hardly surprising, therefore, that this section of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, along with Hegel's theory of dialectic, have been especially favored by the anti-metaphysical interpretations of his philosophy. But the conceptual independence of these Hegelian theories from the fundamental metaphysical assumptions of speculative logic is illusory. This is because a deeper analysis of Hegel's conception of self-consciousness and of the dialectical laws determining its self-development can easily show that these can only be plausible if one accepts some crucial metaphysical presuppositions extensively expounded and justified in the *Science of Logic* (thus removing from them the character of "mere presuppositions").

1) Self-consciousness' immediate realization as appetite occurs through the consumption, i.e., the negation, of the external sensible object. That realization is necessary because the overcoming of consciousness' difference is an essential stage in the process of self-consciousness. This presupposes, however, that the negation of the immediate reality of the sensible object is in principle always possible. Yet empirical observation shows just the opposite: some objects can be consumed by self-consciousness, others cannot; still others can even destroy the immediate existence of self-consciousness. This crucial Hegelian doctrine can therefore be granted only by resorting to a fundamental metaphysical presupposition—namely, the aforementioned principle of the identity of thought and being. The consumption of the material object, Hegel observes, is in principle always possible, because self-consciousness

²⁴ To this contention one could object that in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* the last figure of Self-consciousness, Unhappy Consciousness, involves a relation to the transcendent God; and that in the Philosophy of Spirit the third moment, Reason, is the self-consciousness of the absolute Idea. But in fact the relation of Unhappy Consciousness to the transcendent God is only negative and self-destroying in character, hence no true relation at all; and the conceptual determination of Reason is still devoid of real content, except for the most extrinsic truth criterion, i.e., empirical "correctness" (*Richtigkeit*: *Enc* § 437 A).

knows that the immediate, external object has no true reality, but is, on the contrary, a nullity over against the subject possessing only a seeming independence, and is, in fact, a being which neither merits nor is capable of an existence of its own, but must succumb to the real power of the subject. (*Enc* § 426 A)

Only on the basis of the metaphysical principle of the identity of thought and being, in fact, can Hegel identify true reality with the intelligible object or spiritual reality—which is posited, produced, or created by self-conscious thought—and degrade the sensible object to a mere self-contradictory appearance. This radically idealistic Hegelian contention suffices of itself, I believe, to undermine the plausibility of any empiricist or materialistic interpretation of his thought.

2) Hegel explains appetite's transition into recognitive self-consciousness on the ground that the egoistic satisfaction of the singular individual's needs is transient and therefore illusory. But why is a merely transient satisfaction illusory? Because, Hegel answers (in *Enc* § 428 A), it arises and perishes in time. This satisfaction is a finite experience, which as such contradicts itself, for it reproduces immediate need requiring a new satisfaction, which in turn, being finite, negates itself again and thus gives rise to the spurious infinity of the *progressus in infinitum*. But why is such an infinity spurious, i.e., false and illusory? Because, as already clarified in the *Science of Logic*, in spurious infinity concept and actuality, thought and being, ideality and reality exclude each other, whereas true infinity sublates the finite as an ideal moment of itself, so that thought and being are identical in it (cf. *WL GW* 21.124–42; *TWA* 5:149–71).²⁵ Once again, it is only on the basis of the metaphysical principle of the identity of thought and being that appetite's finite satisfactions can be plausibly held to be illusory.

3) The process of recognitive self-consciousness takes the shape of a conflict. The reason for this, Hegel explains (*Enc* § 433), lies in the fact that, as the unity of consciousness and self-consciousness, both self-consciousnesses relate to each other not only as self-consciousnesses, but also as immediate, sensible, bodily beings. This immediate existence must be negated (both in oneself and in the other), which is precisely what gives rise to the conflict. The metaphysical presupposition of this Hegelian thesis is plainly that immediate, sensible, bodily existence is inadequate to the spiritual, universal essence of self-consciousness, which therefore can realize itself only by negating that immediacy in itself and in the other. Only because true reality coincides with self-conscious thought's pure inwardness, then, does the initial recognition of the other take the shape of a conflict. No in-depth reflections are needed to realize that this Hegelian explanation of the origin of social conflict is simply antithetical to the Marx-

²⁵ See also R. Williams' excellent commentary in Williams 2012, III, p. 161–89.

ist conception of class struggle as the real motor of world-history. For what gives rise to conflict, according to Marx, is the economic-social structure of sensible praxis, namely, of finite needs and their transient satisfactions.²⁶

4) The transition of recognitive into universal self-consciousness occurs because the freedom and intrinsic value the master achieves through his one-sided recognition by the slave are only particular; for the slave is not, in turn, recognized by the master and is therefore not free. But why is a merely particular freedom no true freedom? Because true freedom coincides for Hegel with the negation of the individual's immediate, natural, finite existence, and with his identification with the universal, substantial, intelligible essence of mankind, i.e., Absolute Spirit. As universal, however, such an essence is the same in the master and in the slave. The negation of freedom in the person of the slave, therefore, sets a limit also to freedom's realization in the master's self-consciousness, which, as limited, is finite, and to that extent illusory. Yet the universal idea of mankind, too, is neither an empirical fact nor a content of sense-perception, but is rather an object posited, produced, or created by reason alone, namely, by thought. Once again, only the metaphysical principle of the identity of thought and being can legitimate the famous Hegelian contention that "I am free only if all are free" (*VGesch TWA* 12:31–2).

5) Despite the reciprocity of the recognition occurring in the sphere of recognitive self-consciousness, not even this constitutes the truth of self-consciousness' phenomenological development. This truth can be fully actualized only in the subsequent figure of Reason. This is because in symmetrical recognition both self-consciousnesses are posited as free, independent, and endowed with intrinsic value. They are therefore identical as to their substantial essence, and their difference is only an indeterminate diversity which is, however, no real difference. In reciprocal recognition the two self-consciousnesses are not really two, and therefore universal self-consciousness contradicts itself. But why is indeterminate diversity no real difference? Because, as indeterminate, it is only external, reiterative and ineffable, whereas true difference is internal, qualitative and essential. But why, we must insist, is only internal, qualitative, essential difference a real difference? Because the specific object of pure thought is nothing other than its own objectification as the systematic totality of the Concept's essential differences, whereas indeterminate diversity (although it, too, formally considered, is a self-determination of pure thought) achieves real existence only in and through the quantitative form of the sensible world. Only because

²⁶ Cf. Rinaldi 1981, I, p. 159–203. For a more recent summary of my critique of historical materialism cf. Rinaldi 2012b, p. 241–63.

true reality coincides with thought's activity and products does recognitive self-consciousness contradict itself and pass over into the higher figure of reason.

The arguments I have just developed concordantly prove—if they are valid—that self-consciousness' structure and process are impossible and unthinkable if one disregards or even explicitly rejects the fundamental metaphysical achievements of Hegel's speculative logic, in particular, the principle of the identity of thought and being.

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Elena Ficara

The Interplay Between Logic and Metaphysics

Introduction

Walter Jäschke has argued that Hegel – not unlike Kant – substituted metaphysics with logic and that this implies a critique, and ultimately the dismissal, of metaphysics. In Jäschke’s view, the commentators who variously stress that Hegel’s (but also Kant’s) critique of metaphysics implies the foundation of a new metaphysics are essentially mistaken because they do not take into account “the historical concept of metaphysics” (Jäschke 2012), according to which metaphysics is dead after Kant and Hegel. In this paper I take up the challenge, focusing on what Hegel says explicitly on the concept of metaphysics and its relation to logic in his mature writings (among them, the 1812 Preface to the *Science of Logic*, the Preliminaries of the 1830 *Encyclopaedia*, and the letter to Niethammer of October 23, 1812). The analysis reveals that Hegel does not simply want to substitute metaphysics with logic, ultimately dismissing the former. He does criticize, not unlike Kant, the pre-Kantian dogmatic meaning of “metaphysics”, but explicitly defends an ancient and specifically Aristotelian view. In particular, Hegel aims at both tracing metaphysics back to its logical roots and logic back to its metaphysical roots, thus developing the idea of an interplay between the two disciplines. My claim is that this idea is the main reason of Hegel’s importance for contemporary debates in the philosophy of logic and metaphysics. In what follows, I first reconstruct the Hegelian view, then I show its importance for current debates.

Logic and Metaphysics

Hegel’s reflections on the link between logic and metaphysics move along Aristotelian lines. For Hegel as well as Aristotle, the question of effective truth, intended as thought’s relation to and correspondence with what is, is fundamental in order to explain the meaning of logical validity and necessity.

In the famous letter to Niethammer of October 23, 1812, Hegel observes that “metaphysics is a science about which one is nowadays accustomed to feel embarrassment” (*TWA* 4:406). Among the philosophical disciplines that are taught in the gymnasium, “metaphysics seems to go away empty-handed” because psy-

chology and logic have taken its place (TWA 4:406). At the same time metaphysics is treated as being completely contained within logic.

According to my view, metaphysics in any case falls entirely within logic. Here I can cite Kant as predecessor and authority. His critique reduces hitherto metaphysics to a consideration of the understanding and reason. Logic in Kant's sense can thus be understood in such a way that, beyond the usual content of so-called general logic, what he calls transcendental logic is bound up with and premised to it. In point of content transcendental logic refers to the doctrine of categories, of reflective concepts, and eventually of the concepts of reason: the Analytic and the Dialectic. These objective thought forms constitute an independent content corresponding to the role of the Aristotelian *Categories* [*organon de categoriis*] or erstwhile ontology. Further, they are independent of one's metaphysical system. They occur in transcendental idealism as much as in dogmatism. The latter calls them determinations of beings [*der entium*], while the former calls them determinations of the understanding. (TWA 4:406–7)

Already Kant points out that metaphysics and logic coincide. More specifically, he traces metaphysics back to logic (in his philosophy, according to Hegel, metaphysics becomes an enquiry into understanding and reason). Kant's logic deals both with what used to be the subject matter of ordinary logic and what traditionally belonged to the canon of metaphysics, namely categories like quantity, quality, and relation, concepts of reflection like identity and difference, and concepts of reason. Thus Kant's logic restores the Aristotelian conception and addresses topics that constitute the main field of the *Organon de categoriis*, that is, it treats fundamental concepts which underlie every philosophy, dogmatic as well as transcendental. It is in opposition to pre-critical metaphysics, and not primarily to Aristotle, that Kant points out that those fundamental concepts are determinations of thought and not of being, and as such belong to the logical, not the metaphysical domain. They are functions and determinations of thought rather than, as is the case in Wolff and Baumgarten, qualities or properties of entities (*entia*). This is evidently the core of Kant's (and also Fichte's) transcendental turn. Accordingly, the main thematic object of philosophy as transcendental is thought, and this means that it is a logical field. Hence philosophy is thought about thought (the theory of knowing: *Wissenschaftslehre*). The transcendental turn, however, does not imply an anti-metaphysical attitude, as many commentators suggest. This is made clear by Hegel in the *Science of Logic*.

In the Introduction to the *Science of Logic* Hegel considers the question of the relation between logic and metaphysics in the contexts a) of an explanation about what is the specific field of logic and b) of the critique of merely formal or subjective conceptions of thought. In these respects, Hegel argues, ancient metaphysics had a higher conception of thought than modern philosophy. According to the Ancients, the real is only what is graspable through thought, and thought

is the very ground on which we can grasp something as existent. According to Anaxagoras, for instance, “*nous* is the principle of the world, and the essence of the world is to be determined as thought”; according to Plato, “something has reality only in its concept” (WL GW 21.34/TWA 5:44). Hegel also remarks that the objective, neither psychological nor subjective, conception of thought is already present in our general and ordinary idea of logic.

One can appeal to one's own conceptions of ordinary logic; for it is assumed, for example, that the determinations contained in definitions do not belong only to the knower but are determinations of the object, constituting its innermost essential nature. Or, if from given determinations others are inferred [*geschlossen*], it is assumed that what is inferred [*das Erschlossene*] is not something external and alien to the object, but rather that it belongs to the object itself, [or] that being corresponds to this thinking. (WL GW 21.34–5/TWA 5:45)

According to the ordinary conception of logic, logical rules are neither arbitrary nor dependent on who thinks them. They are rather the very expression of the structure of what really is. In other words, when I derive a conclusion from premises, saying for example: “all conservative politicians lie, Mitt Romney is a conservative politician, therefore Mitt Romney lies”, I claim to adequately grasp the object of what I say (in this case Romney and his truthfulness).

Consequently, in the Preliminaries of the *Encyclopaedia* Logic Hegel calls the logical forms that constitute the subject matter of logic “objective thoughts.”

With these explanations and qualifications, thoughts may be called *objective thoughts* – among which are also to be included the forms which are more especially discussed in the common logic, where they are usually treated as forms of conscious thought only. *Logic therefore coincides with metaphysics, the science of things set and held in thoughts* – thoughts accredited able to express the essential reality of things. (Enc § 24)

Logic thus coincides with metaphysics because the forms we use when we think and reason express the very structures of what is. The forms analyzed in logic are both determinations of thought (and not of things), and determinations of reality since, according to Hegel (basically following Aristotle), thought has the ability to grasp things as they are. Hence metaphysics, the science of the essence of things, is one and the same as logic, the science of valid inference. Hegel observes that “When thought tries to form a concept of things, this concept (as well as sentences and arguments) cannot be composed of determinations and relations which are alien and irrelevant to the things” (Enc § 24).

All this suggests that Hegel follows the ancient Aristotelian conception according to which the necessity of *logos* is not ontologically neutral. As a matter of fact, we also read in the Introduction to the *Science of Logic* that

[w]hen logic is taken as the science of thinking in general, it is understood that this thinking constitutes the *mere form* of a cognition, that logic abstracts from all *content*, and that the so-called second *constituent* of a cognition, namely its *matter*, must come from somewhere else; and that since this matter is supposed to be wholly independent of logic, the latter can provide only the formal conditions of genuine cognition and can neither itself contain real truth, nor even be the *pathway* to real truth, because just what is essential in truth, the content, would lie outside logic. But in the first place, it is quite inept to say that logic abstracts from all *content*, that it teaches only the rules of thinking without any reference to *what* is thought or without being able to consider its nature. For as thinking and the rules of thinking are supposed to be the subject matter of logic, these directly constitute its peculiar content; in them, logic has that second constituent, a matter, about the nature of which it is concerned. (WL GW 21.28/TWA 5:36)

Here Hegel observes that since logic is indeed the science of thought in general (separated from every particular content), or the consideration of the mere form of thought, this formal character of logic is at the origin of the common critique according to which logical forms are empty and have nothing to do with truth. But Hegel takes this view to be misguided, as forms are forms of something (thought), and thought itself both is a specific content (the field of logic as theory) and is able to express what truly is.

In the *Lectures on Logic and Metaphysics* of 1817 Hegel maintains that not only the forms of thought, but also their truth, constitute the research field of logic. This also implies that logical forms are necessarily linked to nature and natural language: “Logic is for us a *natural metaphysics*. Everyone who thinks has it. *Natural logic* does not always follow the rules which are established in the *logic as theory*; these rules often trample on *natural logic*” (*Log&Met* 1817, p. 8).¹

Significantly, Hegel distinguishes between logic as theory and logic as natural logic or natural metaphysics. First, he underlines the role of concrete experience (*natural logic* and *natural metaphysics*) for the discovery and fixation of logical rules in the logical theory; second, he understands experience in an expanded way as already structured by language and thought (*natural logic* and *natural metaphysics*). This conception perfectly coheres with Hegel’s Aristotelianism, as Hegel repeatedly underlines that Aristotle’s empiricism is speculative (cf. Verra 2007, p. 364).

Similarly, in the Preface to the second edition of the *Science of Logic*, we read that logical rules are sunk in human language and human nature, and that the general task of logic as theory is to become aware of this, making the rules that are implicit in our effective speaking and thinking into the thematic field of our

¹ Works Cited: Hegel 1992.

inquiry. In other words, when we speak or reason we use specific patterns, for instance, the disjunctive syllogism (“the light is on or off, it is not on, therefore it is off”), without knowing this. This is the sense in which Hegel speaks about natural logic or natural metaphysics: logical rules are operative, but implicit. Logic as theory (where “logic” is taken in its common meaning, as referring to the discipline) consists in recognizing these patterns and making them the object of inquiry.

The logical theory however sometimes “tramples on” natural logic or metaphysics because it fixes rules, taking them as valid for every linguistic context, despite the fact that these rules are refuted by the natural logic of language, or by natural metaphysics. For instance, logic finds within the natural logic of language forms of the disjunctive syllogism and forgets that this valid form *per se* does not lead to truth (that is, to semantic validity and soundness). Rather, it should be anchored in the analysis of predicates and in the relation between words and what really is. While the argument “the light is on or off; it is not on; therefore it is off” is sound, the argument, equally grounded in the disjunctive syllogism, “you are either for the New York Yankees or for the Boston Red Sox; you are not for the Yankees; therefore you are for the Boston Red Sox” is not sound. It is unsound because the predicates “being for the NY Yankees” and “being for the Boston Red Sox” do not exhaust the logical domain, which contains further possibilities, e.g., rooting for the Chicago White Sox. A logic that dogmatically claims that the rules it establishes are the norm of truth tramples upon natural logic and metaphysics because it disregards the meaning of words and arguments in concrete contexts, and thus their adequacy or inadequacy to express what truly is.

Significantly, doubts about disjunctive syllogisms, conditionals, and other forms of classical logic have led to the development of non-classical logics (Priest 2008). From a Hegelian point of view they are symptoms of the controversial normativity of logic when referred to natural logic and metaphysics.

In the context of his discussion of Atomism Hegel observes that one cannot escape metaphysics (defined here succinctly as tracing nature back to thoughts) by throwing oneself into the arms of Atomism. The atom is in itself a thought and the atomistic conception of matter is in itself a metaphysical conception.

Only animals are, as a matter of fact, pure physicists, because they do not think, while the human being as a thinking being is a born metaphysician. The question is only whether the metaphysics one uses is of the right kind, namely, whether we hold fast to the understanding’s univocal and fixed thought determinations as the basis of our theoretical and practical activity, instead of keeping with the concrete logical Idea. (*Enc* § 98 A1)

Similarly, we read in the *Encyclopaedia* Philosophy of Nature:

What more precisely distinguishes the philosophy of nature from physics is the kind of metaphysics they adopt. As a matter of fact, metaphysics is nothing else than the range of universal thought determinations, the rigorous network into which we bring every matter and through which we make it understandable. Every educated mind has its metaphysics, the instinctual thinking, the absolute power in us over which we become masters only when we make it the object of our knowledge. (*Enc* § 246 A)

Metaphysics is thus the structure of thoughts we use in order to grasp what is. Whether we want it or not, as thinking and acting human beings we always think and act according to some general orienting view (the natural, i.e. unconscious metaphysics). What is more, Hegel observes that these general orienting views can be problematic because they force us to think in certain ways and do particular deeds. When Hegel points out that the main problem is therefore not whether we have a metaphysics or not, but whether our metaphysics is wide ranging and flexible enough, he also mentions the risks of holding to a too rigid metaphysics. He therefore states that there is only one right metaphysics. This is the “concrete, logical idea.” By “concrete logical idea” Hegel means dialectical logic, which Hegel typically defines as a logic of “concreteness,” that is, of “connection.” In this sense, dialectical logic appears to be both the individuation of most general patterns of thought (in Kant’s as well as in contemporary understandings of formal logic) obtained by abstracting from all content and focusing on mere form; and the critical reflection on these forms, a reflection which compels us to ask about their truth, i.e., their effective ability to grasp what is. If for instance we assume atomism as our metaphysics, then we encounter difficulties in the accounting of phenomena, such as the space-time continuum, which are not adequately graspable under the assumption that matter consists of atoms. Thus our logic and metaphysics have to be wide ranging enough for us to grasp what experience presents us with in every case; they must also be flexible, i.e., open to the discussion of their own structures when they reveal themselves to be inadequate.

Hegel’s View within Current Debates

In sum, Hegel’s view of the relationship between logic and metaphysics moves along the following lines:

- 1) In Hegel (as well as in Kant) metaphysics, understood pre-critically as an analysis of the determinations of being, is traced back to and ultimately identified with logic as the analysis of thought determinations. This is the meaning of the transcendental turn in philosophy, which, as Jäschke himself observes, is fundamentally maintained within Hegel’s speculative-dialectical conception.

2) However, to interpret the critical-transcendental turn in philosophy in anti-metaphysical terms *tout court* is reductive and does not capture the complexities of Hegel's conception. According to Hegel, the forms analyzed in logic are not only determinations of thought (and not of things), they are also determinations of the essence of things. As a matter of fact according to Hegel, who in this matter largely follows Aristotle and the Greek tradition, thought has the ability to grasp things as they truly are and to deliver their essential meaning. This is the sense of Hegel's insight: "*Logic* therefore coincides with *metaphysics*, the science of *things* grasped in *thoughts*" (*Enc* § 24).

3) Logic is the theory of logical-metaphysical forms and their validity, and it is also natural logic and metaphysics, that is, the web of implicit theories about the nature of what there is, a web which can be subject to enquiry and thus lead to logic as theory.

4) It is impossible to rid ourselves of metaphysics. The attempt to dismiss metaphysics is in its turn oriented by metaphysical conceptions, that is, by pre-suppositions about what there is and its nature.

5) At issue therefore is not metaphysics *per se* but rather the kind of metaphysics we always already rely upon to orient our thought and action.

These five points allow an assessment of Hegel's view in light of contemporary debates in metaphysics and philosophy of logic. Theses 1) and 2) are substantially coherent with the self-understanding of metaphysics today. The work of a metaphysician implies thesis 1), that is, the idea (already developed by Kant) that our theories about what there is and about the fundamental structures of reality must be traced back to logic. In this way, our theories can be made precise and eventually criticized by using different logical tools such as, among others, the analysis of validity and soundness, conceptual analysis, or theory of argumentation. A contemporary metaphysician also shares thesis 2), which goes back to the ancient Greek tradition, according to which our thought is able to grasp and express reality, and the forms analyzed by logic are neither "empty" nor merely subjective.

Thesis 3) about the interplay between implicit natural logic/metaphysics on the one hand, and logic as theory on the other, means that our confused theories about what there is should be made the object of enquiry. This implies that they may be critically examined through the use of logical tools (1). Thesis 3) also means that natural logic/metaphysics itself should in turn be the critical proof of logico-metaphysical theories. Logical laws should be open and flexible in order to account for new or different states of affairs that emerge from the consideration of natural logic and metaphysics. That logic should be ready to revise its laws in consideration of new evidence emerging within natural logic and metaphysics is a distinctly non-classical insight. It shows the fundamental continu-

ity between Hegel's dialectical conception of logic and the attempts, carried on since the second half of the twentieth century, to broaden and revise the classical logic of Frege and Russell by developing logics able to account for paradoxes, vague predicates, abstract objects, or non-existing objects. That logic is not a fixed canon, but a complex field in development is an insight shared by most contemporary philosophers of logic. As a matter of fact, research in the philosophy of logic recognizes that classical logical patterns of inference are sometimes inadequate to convey truth as they, in principle, should. For this reason, Read defends the importance of a critical reflection on basic logical notions:

There are few books on the philosophy of logic. One reason is a widespread but regrettable attitude towards logic, one of deference and uncritical veneration. It is based on a mistaken belief that since logic deals with necessities, with how things must be, with what must follow come what may, that in consequence there can be no questioning of its basic principles, no possibility of discussion and philosophical examination of the notions of consequence, logical truth, and correct inference. (Read 1995, p. 2)

Restall observes that:

Logic is not a completed science, and teaching it as if it is one gives the mistaken impression that all the important issues have been decided and all of the important questions have been given definitive answers. This is a misrepresentation of the state of the art. (Restall 2006, p. 4)

As for Hegel, so for Read and Beall/Restall logic is not a rigid canon that must be accepted as it is once and for all. Logic as theory has to be continuously rethought in consideration of the natural logic of language and of our implicit metaphysics.

Similarly, according to Haack, thinking about logical necessity involves the reconsideration of implicit epistemological and metaphysical assumptions:

The very rigour that is the chief virtue of formal logic is apt, also, to give it an air of authority, as if it were above philosophical scrutiny. And that is a reason, also, why I emphasise the plurality of logical systems; for in deciding between alternatives one is often obliged to acknowledge metaphysical or epistemological preconceptions that might otherwise have remained implicit. (Haack 1978, p. 10)

This idea is specifically defended by Hegel, but it is already hinted at by Kant in his distinction between *natürliche Logik* and *Wissenschaft der Logik* (see Nuzzo 1997).

Theses 4) and 5) clarify two aspects concerning the meaning of “metaphysics.” Hegel's view that we as thinking beings are essentially “metaphysical and

logical beings” corresponds to the commonly shared metaphysical view according to which thoughts, beliefs and propositions necessarily carry ontological commitments. For Hegel even the atomist, who wants to be free of metaphysics, is a metaphysician because she *thinks*. The atom is a thought, that is, a conceptual structure through which we grasp what is. The problem therefore is not the presence of metaphysics in our thought but the kind of metaphysics (the network of thought determinations) we adopt in order to grasp the world. For this reason, Hegel claims that the right metaphysics is the concrete logico-dialectical idea, i.e., a non-rigid network of thought determinations that includes a sceptical, self-critical instance.

Today’s metaphysicians understand their discipline accordingly. By “metaphysics” today is meant a non-dogmatic, critical enterprise. Even Armstrong’s physicalistic metaphysics (cf. Armstrong 2010), which, among contemporary metaphysical theories, is probably the closest to the image of the world defended by physics, recognizes that this image can be modified and revised.

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Hegel's Metaphysics

The Absence of the Metaphysical Subject in Hegel's Logic

Introduction

Hegel presents the idea of the new dialectic-speculative logic that occupies the two volumes of the *Science of Logic* by positioning it with regard to metaphysics on the one hand, and to Kant's philosophy on the other. With the aim of introducing his new logic, Hegel frames Kant's philosophy, in turn, as a "critique" of traditional metaphysics and, on this basis, as the replacement of metaphysics with a "transcendental logic." The logic that opens the *Encyclopaedia* as the first part of the system of philosophy is introduced in an analogous way. In this case as well, at stake is Hegel's move that positions the new dialectic-speculative logic as the successor of both traditional metaphysics and Kant's transcendental philosophy. Hegel's way of presenting his idea of logic by placing it in the aftermath of Kant's own logical critique of metaphysics fulfills both a historical and a systematic purpose. The speculative "science" that is logic (*WL GW* 21.7–8/*TWA* 5:16) is thereby presented as the historical successor of Kant's transcendental logic, which is itself viewed as succeeding old metaphysics; but it is also considered, precisely on this basis, as the first part and as the peculiar 'foundation' of the entire system of speculative philosophy. Systematically, Hegel's logic is followed by a *Realphilosophie*, i.e., by the two "real sciences of philosophy: the philosophy of nature and the philosophy of spirit"¹ (*WL GW* 21.9/*TWA* 5:18);² while Kant's critical and transcendental philosophy is followed by his own (critical) metaphysics, namely, by a metaphysics of nature and a metaphysics of morals. The question that this way of introducing the idea of the new logic seems to leave open (or, at the very least, in need of further discussion) is, of course, whether Hegel's logic is nonetheless still a metaphysics and, in this case, what kind of metaphysics it may be; or whether it is rather the overcoming—the *Aufhebung*, as it were—of metaphysics *tout court*, a claim that also requires further discussion since it is a claim that cannot even be upheld in Kant's case.

¹ The issue is complicated by the position that the *Phenomenology of Spirit* occupies in Hegel's mature system; see Hegel's remarks at *WL GW* 21.8–9/*TWA* 5:17–18. For this issue, in the vast literature, see the seminal Fulda 1965.

² Translations from Hegel's texts are mine, unless otherwise noted.

The question is inescapable in either case, i.e., both in the case that the suspected answer is positive (Hegel's logic ultimately does offer a new type of metaphysics) and in the case that the desired answer turns out negative (with his logic Hegel does, in fact, overcome metaphysics altogether). In whichever way we look at the problem it seems that the idea of "metaphysics" itself is in need of a more precise qualification, both historically and systematically.

The interpretive problem, however, is more intricate and complex than it may appear at first sight. And the most general reason for this is that the passages of the introductory writings to the *Science of Logic* in which Hegel does position his work in relation to both traditional metaphysics and Kant's transcendental logic are more complex than this brief initial presentation may lead one to suspect. For one thing, even a cursory reading of those introductory texts should make one aware of how in speaking of metaphysics Hegel is always careful to further qualify the term. Hegel does not employ one unique and all-embracing concept of metaphysics. On his view there is at least a historically determined discipline of metaphysics, namely, "former" or "earlier" metaphysics: *vormalige Metaphysik* (WL GW 21.5; 21.48/TWA 5:13, 61) and *frühere Metaphysik* (WL GW 21.10/TWA 5:19). This qualification opens up the question of whether with this term Hegel refers only to the modern and scholastic metaphysics already criticized by Kant or also to ancient Greek metaphysics (there are good reasons to believe that Hegel refers to the former and not to the latter).³ And there is an additional, more puzzling notion of "metaphysics in the proper sense": *eigentliche Metaphysik*, which Hegel identifies with the "pure speculative philosophy" that is the "logical science" itself (WL GW 21.7/TWA 5:16).⁴ Therefore, even a cursory overview of the terminological qualifications that metaphysics receives, when at stake is the introduction of Hegel's new idea of a dialectic-speculative logic, seems to suggest that a closer study of the relation between metaphysics and the new logic is in order. In a proper sense, then, the question is not: Is Hegel's logic metaphysics, or is it instead its replacement and overcoming? But rather: What kind of metaphysics is Hegel's logic, or alternatively, what kind of metaphysics does it replace and overcome?⁵

In this essay I set out to offer a careful reading of the introductory passages of the *Science of Logic* that concern the relation between logic and metaphysics, and more precisely, the relation between the new logic, the old metaphysics, and "metaphysics in the proper sense." Following Hegel's presentation, Kant's criti-

³ See WL GW 12.194/TWA 6:489f.; and see the discussion below.

⁴ This concept is at the center of Fulda 1991. It is my intention here to carry on this discussion a step further.

⁵ For a good overview of the contemporary discussion see most recently Bowman 2013, p. 2–5.

cal philosophy and transcendental logic are the mediating link between them. My aim is to shed light on the issue of Hegel's own position toward metaphysics first by qualifying the type of metaphysics that he may indeed propose (or alternatively discard) in connection with his logic, and second by inquiring more specifically on what this relation to the logic might be. The discussion of this set of issues will occupy the first two sections of the essay, and constitutes my main endeavor. In a final, concluding section, I present what I take to be one of the main distinctive ideas of Hegel's post-Kantian metaphysics developed on the basis of the dialectic-speculative logic as its foundation. This is, in short, Hegel's very idea of logical thinking—the topic of the speculative science that is the logic (and the “science of logic”). Logical thinking, I contend, is the immanent development of an activity without a (metaphysical or transcendental or phenomenological) subject, an activity that does not depend on a (presupposed, given) subject but is such as to produce the subject (or rather the fundamental structures of subjectivity) as its conclusive result.

Hegel's Appraisal of Kant's Critique of Metaphysics

Hegel opens the preface to the first edition of the *Science of Logic* (1812) with a historical overview of the present state of the disciplines, respectively, of metaphysics and logic, that closely echoes the similar considerations on the topic with which Kant had introduced the idea of a “critique of pure reason,” i.e., ultimately, of a “transcendental logic,” in the preface to the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781). Significantly, while Hegel construes his argument in justification of the need of a renewed logic by repeating the argument with which Kant himself had justified the need of his own critique, Hegel now includes Kant's “exoteric” doctrine among the philosophical positions that must be overcome if philosophy ought to keep up with the current historical developments of the world of “spirit” (*WL GW* 21.5–7/*TWA* 5:13–15). In sum, with regard to metaphysics, and more precisely, to what he specifies as traditional old metaphysics (*WL GW* 21.5/*TWA* 5:13: *vormalige Metaphysik*), Hegel suggests two connected points. First, despite its best intentions, Kant's critique is ultimately not critical enough. Kant criticizes (subjective) reason but leaves objectivity in its rationality untouched (first and foremost, the *Ding an sich*). Second, in his attempt to leave old metaphysics behind once and for all Kant has left an intolerable vacuum on the side of metaphysics: transcendental logic begins to replace early modern metaphysics but is unable to really offer a strong and positive al-

ternative to it. Accordingly, the new dialectic-speculative logic Hegel is about to present should have something to propose on both these fronts. It must take upon itself the critical stance that Kant assigned to his own transcendental logic, and it must be better at this than Kant's logic was in this respect; and it must fill the gap left open by transcendental philosophy with regard to the criticized metaphysics, or it must at least address in a new way the need that old metaphysics used to fulfill.

Hegel's diagnosis of the present state of "what was hitherto called metaphysics" is grim. This metaphysics, he observes, "has been...extirpated root and branch, and has vanished from the ranks of the sciences" (*WL GW 21.5/TWA 5:13*). At stake herein is clearly scholastic metaphysics, which Hegel observes is customarily divided into rational psychology, cosmology, natural theology.⁶ It is a "fact," Hegel contends, that in the contemporary discussion all "interest either in the content or in the form or in both content and form of older metaphysics" has entirely been lost (*WL GW 21.5/TWA 5:13*). And this is a "remarkable" fact indeed. For, on Hegel's view, the relation that a people entertains with (its) metaphysics is analogous to the relation it entertains with its constitutional law, with moral and social customs, and traditions in general. Now, when "a people loses its metaphysics" the spirit that in metaphysics is engaged with its own essence in an act of self-reflection is met with a vacuum, with the loss of something very real that concerns the very nature of spirit (*WL GW 21.5/TWA 5:13*). In other words, metaphysics as such lies at the very center of spirit's life (it is neither an elitist cultural by-product of spirit's activity nor an accessory intellectual pursuit).⁷

The main culprit of this loss of metaphysics and metaphysical interest seems to be Kant's "exoteric doctrine" (*WL GW 21.5/TWA 5:13*), which Hegel sums up in the claim that the "understanding" should remain within the strict limits of experience lest the cognitive faculty, now reduced to merely "theoretical reason," would end up spinning illusory mental fancies with no cognitive value. In truth, however, Hegel considers Kant's limitation of the scope of the understanding to experience (with the exclusion, famously, of the *Ding an sich*) to be identical to renouncing "speculative thinking" as such. And speculative thinking, for Hegel as already for Kant, is fundamentally *metaphysical* thinking—and notice: speculative thinking is "metaphysical" in Kant's sense of the "natural" meta-

6 These at least are the subdivisions that Hegel mentions in this passage. To these ontology should be added.

7 This important point should be kept in mind with regard to the question of the dispensability of metaphysics as such.

physics of reason and in Hegel's own sense of "metaphysics in the proper sense," not in the historical sense of "former metaphysics."⁸ Thus, Hegel's hint herein is that it is in relation with the activity of "speculative thinking" that "metaphysics in the proper sense" should be developed so as to replace the void left by Kant's unfinished (or incomplete) critique of reason. It is not yet clear what this development looks like.

Despite all appearances, the position Hegel expresses in this argument by connecting the demise of former metaphysics with Kant's transcendental restriction of reason's (or rather of the understanding's) knowledge claims is ambiguous. The fact that a "people loses its metaphysics" is not, in itself, a bad thing. For, on Hegel's view, all the productions of spirit—in the social and political realm as well as in the sphere that he calls "absolute," i.e., in art, religion, and philosophy—are meaningful only until they are "actual" (*wirklich*) and alive, i.e., infused by the "spirit of a people" and corresponding to its current intellectual, cultural, and social practices. In the same way, in the particular case of metaphysics, if it is the case that a certain *corpus* of doctrines or set of issues (such as, for example, the issue of the soul's immortality or even that of god's existence)⁹ no longer corresponds to a people's interests and vital needs, having become a "dead positive," i.e., a useless relict of the past, then its dismissal is a historical necessity. It is the condition on which alone spirit can be set in the position of moving forward in its historical trajectory. Since the point, for Hegel, is clearly not to hold on to old metaphysics no matter what (or no matter what its relation to the historical present and the current needs of spirit), but rather to evaluate whether metaphysics still fulfills the needs of spirit in the present time, and since the answer to the latter point is clearly negative, Kant's critique seems to be by all accounts justified. Former metaphysics may very well have become a "dead positive," so that Kant's final blow may be responding to a deeper historical necessity.¹⁰ And yet, while Hegel embraces Kant's critical stance toward metaphysics, he rejects the philosophical claim in the name of which Kant carries on his critique. Hegel's more subtle point is that Kant's critique of old metaphysics is being performed on the wrong grounds—i.e., in the name of the need to draw the limits of the under-

⁸ See *KrV* Avii f.; B22: "metaphysics as natural predisposition."

⁹ These are the questions that Hegel mentions in the passage under discussion (*WL GW* 21.5/*TWA* 5:13).

¹⁰ In this case the causal relation connecting Kant's criticism to the contemporary loss of interest in metaphysics may very well be the following: Kant seems to strike the final blow to metaphysics but all he is doing is accelerating a process historically already under way. He manages to produce the demise of metaphysics because interest in it has already been declining.

standing's cognitive claims or on the assumption that reason in its theoretical validity (i.e., as speculative reason) is unable to reach true cognition. Thus, because of its skewed central philosophical point, Kant's critique has not only destroyed old historical metaphysics (which is a justified aim) but has uprooted a far deeper and indeed valid idea, an idea that is metaphysical as well, and is metaphysical in "the more proper sense"—namely, the idea of "speculative thinking." And this latter, for Hegel, is an unacceptable result. By contrast, the idea of speculative thinking becomes the center of Hegel's new logic. Hegel's task is to reclaim the realm of pure speculative thinking as the province, this time, not of metaphysics but of a new type of logic.

On the other hand, while it may very well be that the demise of old metaphysics is a historical and historically justified necessity, it is also true that "to see a cultivated people without metaphysics" is indeed a "singular spectacle" (*WL GW* 21.5/*TWA* 5:14). For, metaphysics is like the *sancta sanctorum* or the "*Al-lerheiligstes*" in a people's temple. And as the center of the temple cannot be left empty, something must replace the lost metaphysics; something else and new must now be called in to address the different need that old metaphysics has grown unable to fulfill—a need however that is still there albeit historically transformed. The question is clearly whether such replacement should be a new form of metaphysics or something entirely different. In the preface to the 1781 edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant expressed a similar thought. Endorsing a historical perspective, Kant approvingly regards metaphysics as the "queen of all the sciences" (*KrV* A1x). Metaphysics held indeed the title of "queen" in ancient Greek times but has been demoted from her throne by the struggles between dogmatism and skepticism during the early modern period. The open question, for Kant, is whether this lofty role can still be assigned to metaphysics in the present modern age. The task of the critique of reason is precisely to ascertain whether metaphysics as "speculative cognition of reason" can be "science" or can be brought onto the "secure path of science."¹¹

Dialectic-Speculative Logic, Transcendental Logic, and Metaphysics

After Kant's critique, Hegel takes up this question again and carries the answer a step further. However, following in Kant's aftermath, Hegel's question no longer regards metaphysics directly but concerns, this time, logic. At issue is not wheth-

¹¹ This is the issue addressed in the 1787 preface to *KrV*, Bxiv f.

er metaphysics can be made into a science but the way in which logic can be made into a “science of logic” (*WL GW* 21.10/*TWA* 5:19). What is it that constitutes the scientific character of logic as the science of speculative thinking? The shift from metaphysics to logic is justified, on Hegel's view, by the way in which Kant has answered that central question. For, Kant has answered it by *reducing metaphysics to logic*—or, at least, by first attempting such a reduction. This is the crucial achievement of the critical philosophy. And yet Kant has not entirely delivered on his promise. Hegel's claim is that “the critical philosophy did indeed already turn metaphysics into logic,” but it stopped short of fulfilling this task because “it gave to the logical determinations an essentially subjective significance out of fear of the object” (*WL GW* 21.35/*TWA* 5:45). On Hegel's view, Kant has correctly understood that logic is concerned with (the cognition of) *objects* and not, as traditional formal logic intended, with the mere form of thinking in abstraction from all content or object. Accordingly, Kant has given to logic an objective content, i.e., has set next to general logic a “particular” logic which is “transcendental” to the extent that it deals with objective contents (as the logic of a “particular” way of thinking objects: *KrV* B76/A52).

This is the first sense to be given to the program that Hegel describes as the act of “turning metaphysics into logic” (*WL GW* 21.35/*TWA* 5:45). Moreover, the critique of metaphysics to which the Transcendental Dialectic is explicitly dedicated constitutes the second division of the “transcendental logic.” In effect, in the first Critique Kant subsumes the entire field of traditional metaphysics under the title of “transcendental logic” insofar as the objects of metaphysics are critically revisited and systematically obtained from the idea of this logic itself.¹² The principles of ontology are reconstructed in the Transcendental Analytic, those of rational psychology, cosmology, and theology in the three corresponding chapters of the Transcendental Dialectic. And yet, while stressing these achievements, Hegel adds that out of “fear of the object”—or, as he puts it in the *Encyclopaedia*, out of a “tenderness for worldly things” (*Enc* § 48R)—the material content has been kept outside of the productive activity of the understanding and relegated to the separate faculty of sensibility. For this reason, Kant has shunned away from the more radical idea that once belonged to metaphysics—to be sure, to ancient Greek metaphysics (to Anaxagoras' *nous* and to Plato's ideas)¹³—namely, from the recognition that truth is not a function of subjective

¹² Significantly, Hegel's appraisal converges here with that of an interpreter such as Tonelli (1975, p. 186): in Tonelli's view the *Critique of Pure Reason* is “a treatise on Logic as much as on Metaphysics.”

¹³ Here we already have an implicit distinction between ancient Greek metaphysics and modern scholastic metaphysics.

thinking alone, separated from the objectivity of things. Truth belongs instead to “objective thinking” or to the rationality inherent in the objects themselves to the extent that they are grasped by thinking (*WL GW* 21.33–4/*TWA* 5:44). Accordingly, Kant has left the infamous “thing in itself” untouched by the logical forms, i.e., he has presented it as in principle conceptually ungraspable, as the absolute, irrevocable limit of the understanding’s cognition. Thus, in Hegel’s view, Kant’s reduction of metaphysics to logic, rightly initiated by the introduction of the idea of transcendental logic as a logic of our cognition of objects, has not been radical enough, and has stopped short of its final objective, which is to eventually confer to metaphysics *as logic* the status of science: the science of the speculative knowledge of objects. Only this logic would be “metaphysics in the proper sense.” In this way, former metaphysics has been undermined (rightfully) by Kant’s critique but has not been replaced by a legitimate and necessary science of speculative reason. Herein lies the failure of Kant’s doctrine and the new task of Hegel’s logic.

There is a sense in which Hegel’s project of a new dialectic-speculative logic (i.e., logic as “science”) begins where Kant left off his critical transformation of metaphysics into a logic that is transcendental, that is, into a logic that unlike traditional formal or general logic (the logic which underlies early modern metaphysics), does not make abstraction from all content of cognition but concerns instead our way of thinking and knowing *objects* (*KrV* B78–9/A54–5).¹⁴ In this regard Hegel claims that the first division of his Logic, Objective Logic, “would correspond in part to what for him [Kant] is transcendental logic” (*WL GW* 21.47/*TWA* 5:59),¹⁵ while, consistent with what we have seen above, the objective logic also “replaces former metaphysics” (*WL GW* 21.48/*TWA* 5:61). Only transcendental logic, not general logic, is a theory of knowledge (a theory of *Erkennen* and not only of *Denken*).¹⁶ For, only transcendental logic can provide an account (i) of the origin of our representations and (ii) of how our concepts can relate to objects, hence (iii) of the different types of objects to which our concepts relate (alternatively, objects of possible experience or merely intelligible objects).¹⁷ On Kant’s view, the categories of general logic are logical determinations or concepts in which abstraction is made from all objects that can be thought through them. Transcendental logic, by contrast, does not—at least in

¹⁴ See Hegel’s own rendering of Kant’s program at *WL GW* 21.28, 21.47–8/*TWA* 5:36, 59.

¹⁵ Notice, however, the qualification: it would correspond “in part.”

¹⁶ For the distinction see *KrV* Bxxvi fn.

¹⁷ See Sedgwick 1996, p. 151. In the end, this is the reason why the synthetic-analytic distinction and the issue of synthetic a priori judgments can only be raised by a logic that is transcendental.

Kant's view—make abstraction from the content of cognition. And this is the main point that speaks for its introduction in the first Critique given the problem with which transcendental philosophy is concerned, namely, the problem of our a priori cognition of objects (insofar as the origin of this cognition is to be possible a priori).¹⁸ Hegel, instead, while upholding the instance to which transcendental logic responds, i.e., the need for thinking to be thinking of *determinate objects*, considers Kant's logic to be, in the end, as general and abstract, i.e., deprived of any relation to objects, as formal logic is. Hegel's point is that while the latter is abstract programmatically, the former is abstract (or insufficiently objective) because it rests on the requirement that the understanding refer to sensible intuition for the givenness of objects, consequently limiting the understanding's activity to the realm of possible experience (which includes in turn the possibility of sensible intuition). It is precisely on this issue that hinges both Hegel's critique of Kant's transcendental logic and the argument in favor of a dialectic-speculative logic uniquely capable of gaining the true relation to objectivity and "real truth" (WL GW 21.28/TWA 5:36) that Kant reclaimed to his logic yet failed, in Hegel's appraisal, to guarantee. It is precisely on this point that Hegel upholds against Kant the objectivist claim of metaphysics. In sum, Hegel's logic follows in the aftermath of Kant's transcendental logic (hence in the aftermath of his critique of "old metaphysics") but reclaims to it the speculative core of "metaphysics proper." His logic is fundamentally "speculative" in its claim of "real truth" thereby siding with metaphysics against the defeatist conclusions of Kant's transcendentalism which deny to speculative reason any access to truth.

Just as Kant maintained that the categories of transcendental logic are taken from traditional general logic (in the systematic derivation that is the "metaphysical deduction" of the categories), Hegel now maintains that the "content" of his own logic can be found in "earlier metaphysics and logic" (WL GW 21.10/TWA 5:19). The content and the "received material" provided by the "known forms of thinking [*Denkformen*]" constitute for Hegel the "necessary condition" and unavoidable "presupposition" of his new logic. And yet, with a colorful image, Hegel suggests that in themselves (as well as in the most recent uses that they have found in contemporary logics) those forms resemble the "dead bones of a skeleton thrown together in a disorderly heap" (WL GW 21.10/TWA 5:19). Former logic is as "dead" and meaningless with regard to the actuality of spirit as former metaphysics is. But in addition Hegel's remark also implies that a fundamental

18 See the general definition of *transzendental* in relation to *Erkenntnis* in KrV B25/A12, and the corresponding B80/A56 in the discussion of logic.

flaw of former logic is the lack of organic interconnectedness of the logical forms that made up its content—the skeleton that is supposed to support them is “thrown together in a disorderly heap.” While Kant has been successful in diagnosing the “dead” state of these disciplines, his transcendental logic has not been able to revive them. Properly, however, it is Hegel’s considered view that what is dead cannot be simply called back to life, that no historically past form of life can be transferred to the present without being fundamentally transformed. And yet a new life can indeed be infused in those dead bones by making them the content (or the body, as it were) of an utterly new type of logic. In charge of such a transformation is what Hegel calls the logical “method” (*WL GW* 21.8, 21.37/*TWA* 5:17, 48). It is the method that is responsible both for making logic into a science and for infusing new life into the dead bones of traditional logic and metaphysics (*WL GW* 21.37/*TWA* 5:48). Thus, in the method lies the properly “speculative” nature of Hegel’s new logic. Accordingly, it is with the logical method that Hegel offers the ‘successor’ of (old and Kantian critical) metaphysics as well as his proposal for a “metaphysics in the proper sense.” For, what is new and distinctive of his dialectic-speculative logic—both in relation to general logic and its metaphysics, and in relation to Kant’s transcendental logic and his critique of metaphysics—is the “method” through which the logical forms constituting the “realm of thought” are presented according to their own “immanent activity,” i.e., in their internal and “necessary development” (*WL GW* 21.10/*TWA* 5.19).¹⁹ In this way Hegel brings to the fore two related features of the method characterizing his new logic. First, at stake herein is thinking viewed as a process of development or as an on-going movement, and not the presentation of a static haphazard list or of an unmoved “table” of categories (such as Aristotle’s or Kant’s). The logical forms that Hegel’s logic inherits from the tradition are discrete stations or markings in pure thinking’s ongoing development. Second, the movement that thinking itself is (and the movement that thinking successively performs) is a process that the logic describes in its immanent, internal, properly organic unfolding. It is not a process triggered and sustained by the intervention of an “external reflection,” of an observing “we” (as in Hegel’s earlier *Phenomenology of Spirit*), of a transcendental “I think,” or of a *deus ex machina* in whichever way conceived. The immanent development of thinking, Hegel contends, is the unfolding of the logical determinations “in and of themselves” (*WL GW* 21.31, 21.47–8/*TWA* 5:40, 60: in this case, with no reference to the “I think”). Now the presentation of such movement is also, at the same time, the

19 See *WL GW* 21.8/*TWA* 5:17: “*immanente* Seele des Inhalts selbst” and “*immanente* Entwicklung des Begriffs” (my emphasis).

true and most radical (self-) critique of those determinations (*WL GW* 21.30–1/*TWA* 5:40). Hegel contends that this method of immanent self-development of thinking is what constitutes the properly new enterprise of his logic (not the particular content, which instead can be seen as inherited from the tradition). In addition, this is also, and significantly, the “speculative side” (*WL GW* 21.10/*TWA* 5:19) of the logic which has been hitherto neglected—that which neither traditional logic nor Kant’s transcendental logic have so far taken into account.

The Absence of the Subject in Hegel’s Logic

On the basis of these fundamental transformations of both the claims of metaphysics and of Kant’s transcendental logic (to which former metaphysics has been reduced and to which Hegel’s objective logic now corresponds, albeit only “in part”) Hegel announces that his dialectic-speculative logic should be understood “as the *system of pure reason*, as the realm of pure thought” (*WL GW* 21.34/*TWA* 5:44—my emphasis). In this way, Hegel’s speculative system of pure reason replaces Kant’s transcendental critique of pure reason. The basis of this transformation is the speculative method, namely, the way in which the content of both former metaphysics and Kantian logic are presented, this time according to their immanent development. Hence it is on the method that hinges Hegel’s proposal of a new logic that, by articulating the immanent development of the “realm of pure thought,” now offers the speculative successor of metaphysics. This is “metaphysics in the proper sense or pure speculative philosophy” (*WL GW* 21.7/*TWA* 5:16).

While I cannot presently dwell on a discussion of Hegel’s method,²⁰ in this conclusive step of my analysis I contend that this argument already offers the main features of Hegel’s peculiar—post-Kantian and fundamentally logical—metaphysics. This is, I submit, a metaphysics *without the subject*. I now want to sketch out the character of Hegel’s new logical metaphysics. I shall restrict my argument to those aspects that directly result from the problematic constellation heretofore explored.

I have argued above that Hegel understands his dialectic-speculative logic to be the immanent articulation of the “realm of pure thought.” In opposition to Kant’s critical limitation of transcendental logic to the cognition of the understanding within the strict bounds of experience, away from the claims of speculative reason, Hegel qualifies the form of thinking at stake in his logic as “spec-

²⁰ For this topic, see Nuzzo 2005 and 2011.

ulative” thinking. In addition, as we have seen, he argues that such thinking, topic and content of the “pure science” is “objective thinking” (WL GW 21.34/TWA 5:43). Thinking is objective at least in three respects.

First, it is thinking that at this point has overcome the “opposition of consciousness” (WL GW 21.33, 21.35/TWA 5:43, 45), i.e., the separation between subject and object, certainty and truth that has driven the development of the “science of the experience of consciousness” that is the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Herein lies one of the differences between the unfolding of pure thinking in the logic and the phenomenological development of consciousness. In the latter case, the logical forms are not taken in their pure independence—“in and for themselves,” as it were—but are considered exemplified in a concrete object, namely, consciousness (cf. WL GW 21.8, 21.35/TWA 5:17, 45; *Enc* § 25 and R). In this connection, objective thinking as content of the logic is opposed to the subjectivity of thinking inhering in the structure of consciousness—a form of thinking that is necessarily “finite” (*Enc* § 25) since it is affected by the opposition constitutive to consciousness.

Second, logical thinking is objective since it has overcome the transcendental standpoint whereby the logical categories (and ultimately the entire logic) are anchored in the “I think” of the transcendental unity of apperception (KrV B134 fn.). Making the categories dependent on the human subjective cognitive faculty, Kant has jeopardized their capacity to express the objective truth of things. On the one hand, he has forced transcendental logic to face the inescapable problem of the objective validity of its concepts (in the Transcendental Deduction); on the other hand, he has denied such validity to the concepts of reason (or ideas). Significantly, for Hegel, the appraisal of Kant’s transcendental logic does often converge with the necessity to overcome the phenomenological science through a science of logic. Kant’s transcendentalism is as subjective (and finite) as the phenomenological standpoint. The Kantian separation of cognitive faculties (namely, sensibility and understanding) and their skewed relationship to truth replicates the separation of truth and certainty, object and subject staged throughout the phenomenological process. The standpoint of speculative logic, by contrast, is presented as the standpoint in which “the logical element” (*das Logische*) is “the purely rational element” (*das Rein-Vernünftige*) (WL GW 21.35/TWA 5:45), i.e., no longer either mere understanding (*Verstand*) separated from sensibility, objectivity, and truth, or thinking affected by the “opposition of consciousness,” but the objective speculative sphere of reason and the rational element (*Vernunft-Vernünftiges*).

Third and finally, thinking is objective to the extent that, while meeting the claim of metaphysics (truth is in the objective or rational constitution of things), liberates thinking from its inherence in metaphysical essences and “substrates”

(*WL GW 21.49/TWA 5:61*). Objective thinking is no longer *res cogitans*; it is no longer a substance that thinks—as it was in pre-Kantian metaphysics.

My suggestion is now that the connection of these three claims implies that the speculative logic staging the immanent self-development of pure objective thinking is the presentation of thinking as a process without a subject who/that thinks. This, I maintain, is the most salient feature of Hegel's new logical metaphysics. In its result and conclusion the logic discloses what pure speculative thinking properly is. Thinking is a process that is utterly free from presuppositions: it does not depend on a metaphysical substrate; it does not depend on a psychological, phenomenological, or transcendental subject who does the thinking (one for whom thinking is a function or capacity—*facultas* or *Vermögen*). In fact, Hegel's logic shows that the reverse is rather the case. In fact, the subject—this time, however, as logical subjectivity or “personality” (*WL GW 12.236/TWA 6:549*, where the idea is conclusively “*Persönlichkeit*”)—is the final result of the immanent, complete development of the pure process of thinking. It is on the basis of the logical idea of personality that the philosophy of spirit as *Realphilosophie* will develop the manifold concrete senses, forms, and figures of subjectivity: the psychological subject of subjective spirit, the collective “we” of objective spirit, and the complex activities of the individual yet absolute spirit. In the logic, however, thinking is pure activity, without a subject who performs it and without an intentional object toward which such activity is directed. Logical thinking constitutes itself as both subject and object by first performing the very activity that thinking is, and as the result of such activity. Logical thinking is nothing before the performing of this activity; and it is nothing besides the activity it successively performs. This general view reflects Hegel's contention in the practical philosophy according to which the acting subject is nothing but what she does—man is the “series of his actions” and nothing beyond his actions (*RPh* § 124). Indeed, on Hegel's Protestant view, even “god as living god and even more as absolute spirit is known only in his acts (*in seinen Werken*),” i.e., by what he effects (*WL GW 12.128/TWA 6:404*). In sum, I suggest considering the pure, immanent development of the logic as the development of the activity progressively unfolding in it without an agent, a phenomenological consciousness, a mental faculty, a *res*, a transcendental subject in which such activity would allegedly inhere and from which such activity would depend. This is instead the action performed by pure thinking but is also the action by which pure thinking is first constituted in what it properly is and ultimately, into the “personality” of the absolute idea.

Let me now come to a brief summarizing conclusion. In the *Science of Logic*, in introducing his dialectic-speculative logic as the first and foundational part of the system of philosophy, Hegel confronts the issue of metaphysics both in a his-

torical and in a systematic way. Historically, he qualifies the metaphysics that his logic leaves behind by following Kant's critique and radicalizing his position. "Old" or "former" metaphysics is a "dead" relict of the past that no longer fulfills the philosophical and intellectual needs of the present. In this regard, he fully embraces Kant's transcendental critique. But Kant's merit has been also to reduce metaphysics to logic. This is the starting point of Hegel's new logic. In this respect, however, Kant has not fulfilled his promise. The transcendental logic has left out "speculative thinking" declaring it unable to reach real or objective truth. Now speculative thinking is what Hegel draws instead at the center. Speculative thinking is the root of a different kind of metaphysics, i.e., of what Kant calls the natural predisposition of reason, and of what for Hegel is "metaphysics in the proper sense." Hegel's logic offers the latest proposal in this regard: he offers a logical metaphysics of speculative thinking. Such logical metaphysics no longer asks questions concerning the immateriality of the soul or even the existence of god (cf. *WL GW* 21.5/*TWA* 5:13). It is a metaphysics that has completely overcome its dependence on a presupposed subject, be it a psychological, phenomenological, transcendental, or metaphysical subject. It is, by contrast, a metaphysics that first produces the subject as *Geist* or spirit. Now, I contend that one cannot make sense of Hegel's philosophy without *this* metaphysics.

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Robert Bernasconi

Hegel's *Faith and Knowledge* and the Metaphysics that Takes the Place of Metaphysics

I

If one wants to summarize in two short sentences Hegel's position on metaphysics, one cannot do much better than to say: "Metaphysics is dead. Long live metaphysics." This was reflected in Hegel's ambiguous relation to Kant. In 1812 he appealed to Kant as his "predecessor and authority" in order to justify his decision to abandon the old dogmatic metaphysics of Christian Wolff (*GW* 10/2.825),¹ but I shall show that he also believed that Kant's rejection of the old metaphysics was itself not entirely free of dogmatism (cf. *VGesch* 3, p. 570.² See also Bowman 2013, p. 91, 99). In other words, Hegel's view was that there was a need both for a further reassessment of the old metaphysics and the development of something new capable of taking its place.

Hegel called the new metaphysics that he introduced to take the place of the former metaphysics by the old name "logic."³ This is reflected in numerous passages. So, for example, in the 1817 Heidelberg Encyclopedia we read: "In the essential meaning given to it by speculative philosophy, logic takes the place of what otherwise is called metaphysics and is treated as a separate science" (*Enc* 1817 § 18).⁴ In 1812, in the first edition of the first volume of the *Science of Logic*, Hegel wrote that the idea of logic, "objective logic," takes the place of "the former *metaphysics* which was supposed to be the scientific edifice of the world as constructed by *thoughts* alone" (*WL GW* 21.48).⁵ Four years later Hegel wrote to Friedrich von Rauner to address the teaching of philosophy at universities, and on the topic of the subdisciplines within philosophy, he judged that "The totally abstract universal belongs to *logic*, along with everything for-

¹ Works Cited: Hegel 2006.

² Works Cited: Hegel 1836.

³ That the new metaphysics should go under the title "logic" was also expressed in 1791 by Karl Reinhold: whereas the Leibnizian school employed the principle of contradiction as the first principle of metaphysics, for Reinhold it would be known by future philosophy as the first principle of logic (Reinhold 1791, p. 111).

⁴ Works Cited: Hegel 2000.

⁵ Citations refer to the Di Giovanni translation (Work Cited: Hegel 2010b).

merly included in metaphysics” (*Briefe* 2, p. 102).⁶ Ten years later still, he continued to promote the same view that logic was taking the place of the old metaphysics and yet should still be understood as metaphysics in another sense. He explained in the *Encyclopedia* Logic that “logic thus coincides with *metaphysics*, i.e., the science of things captured in *thoughts* that have counted as expressing *the essentialities of things*” (*Enc* § 24).

What is at stake here is not so much a definition of metaphysics as a way of philosophizing. The phrase “Hegel without metaphysics” suggests that what we need is a slimmed down version of Hegel, but for Hegel metaphysics was not a separate science and is not separable from the system of science as a whole. One of the main reasons why he needed to renounce the former metaphysics was precisely because it thought of itself as a part or separable sub-discipline within philosophy, whereas for Hegel a genuine whole is possible only where no parts exist in themselves (cf. *GW* 4.393–4).⁷ There cannot be a Hegel without metaphysics for the same reason that there cannot be a Hegel without religion. In the 1827 Preface to the Second Edition of the Berlin *Encyclopedia* Hegel wrote that “religion can probably exist without philosophy but philosophy cannot exist without religion, instead encompassing religion within it” (*Enc* 1827, *GW* 19.13).⁸ What is said here about religion is also true of metaphysics.

I argue here that Hegel’s approach to metaphysics in all its various forms, including the metaphysics he himself promoted under the label “logic,” was governed by his relation to the history of philosophy. More specifically, Hegel was obsessed throughout his philosophical career with countering the widespread disillusionment with philosophy that he saw as arising from the presentation of the history of philosophy as an endless succession of different philosophies. His first major philosophical publication, the 1801 essay *The Difference between Fichte’s and Schelling’s System of Philosophy*, opens with the following diagnosis: “An age which has so many philosophical systems lying behind it in its past must apparently arrive at the same indifference which life acquires after it has tried all forms” (*GW* 4.9/Hegel 1977a, p. 85). Hegel’s solution to the problem is summarized in the formula “philosophy is one.” This formulation repeated a claim found in “On the Essence of Philosophical Criticism generally, and its relationship to the Present State of Philosophy in particular,” a text that served as the Introduction to the first issue of the *Critical Journal of Philosophy* that Hegel co-wrote with Schelling: “The fact that philosophy is but one, and can only be

⁶ Citations refer to the Butler/Seiler translation (Works Cited: Hegel 1984b).

⁷ *Jenaer kritische Schriften*, Works Cited: Hegel 1968.

⁸ Works Cited: Hegel 1989.

one, rests on the fact that Reason is but one" (GW 4.117/ Hegel & Schelling 1985, p. 275). In the Preface to the *Metaphysics of Morals* Kant too insisted that there is only one philosophy (cf. AA 6:207), but what that formula meant for Kant and what it meant for Hegel is radically different.

In Kant all past philosophy is false because it is not Kantian. In Hegel all past philosophy is, as philosophy, true. Hegel resolved the problem of the multiplicity of forms of philosophy by taking them from contingent history and by locating them within "the history of the one, eternal Reason, presenting itself in infinitely manifold forms" (GW 4.31/Hegel 1977a, p. 114). Although Hegel is sometimes read as if he was the philosopher who left behind the eclectic approach to the history of philosophy of the eighteenth century by adopting a teleological reading of that history, that was already accomplished by the Kantians—Karl Reinhold, Johann Buhle, Wilhelm Tennemann, and Carl Heydenreich—whom Hegel resolutely opposed. They wrote to establish Kant's originality against all those readings that immediately assimilated his philosophy to already existing forms, readings that refused to acknowledge his originality, and they did so by judging all philosophy from his standpoint (see Park 2014, p. 17–19). For Hegel, by contrast, to think in terms of infinity (*Unendlichkeit*) is to renounce all thinking in terms of ends. It is also to renounce the very idea of a narrative history: "There is no series or sequence in what is truly spiritual, or in the Idea" (GW 4.411/Hegel 1977b, p. 186). The former metaphysics is not something past in the sense of being something dead and buried. It simply misunderstood itself. The new metaphysics could take the place of the former metaphysics, only by giving the latter its proper place. He explained in the Heidelberg *Encyclopedia* of 1817 that "Metaphysics is something past only in relation to the history of philosophy; for itself, it is, as it has become in recent times, the outlook of understanding on the objects of reason" (*Enc 1817* § 18). He meant by this that the history of philosophy, as written by the Kantians, consigned metaphysics to the past, but that they thereby failed to acknowledge its legitimacy under another description, which it has within the system of science. Consider how the same sentence reads in the 1827 and 1830 versions. The sentence was modified for these versions so that the last part read "of itself it is always on hand as the *perspective of the understanding alone* on the objects of reason" (*Enc 1827* § 27; *Enc* § 27). The main point of the change from "in recent times" to "always" seems to have been to insist on the abiding interest of what the Kantians had dismissed. Hegel assigned a place to the old metaphysics even after it had been consigned to the past, but it is a limited legitimacy and it only has that legitimacy when seen in a certain light.

Otherwise said, although metaphysics seen from the perspective of progressive accounts of the history of philosophy promoted by the Kantians is dead, it is

not dead altogether. It lives on in ordinary understanding, which has its own legitimacy. Hegel did not deny that metaphysics is past from the perspective of history, but he insisted that this was not the perspective of reason. That is to say, Hegel believed it was a mistake to follow Kant's instructions and put to one side the metaphysics that the Kantian philosophy claimed to have superseded. So even though logic takes the place of the old metaphysics, and so is in a sense the new metaphysics, the old metaphysics is not consigned to the scrapheap of history for the simple reason that for Hegel history is by no means a scrapheap once one ceases to view it as a sequence leading to the present. He thus problematized all efforts to think philosophically without incorporating what had previously been described under the label "metaphysics." But what is that incorporation? What survives? To answer those questions and to understand why Hegel understood those as the appropriate questions I turn now to Hegel's *Faith and Knowledge*. I argue that it needs to be read through the lens of the Introduction to the *Critical Journal of Philosophy* where it first appeared. It is there that Hegel presented for the first time many of the decisive strategies that he would continue to deploy throughout his philosophical writings and that in particular govern his approach to the former metaphysics.

II

Faith and Knowledge introduces three contributions indispensable to an understanding of Hegel's account of metaphysics and of our relation to it.

First, the constantly repeated theme of *Faith and Knowledge* is that whenever one opposes a thesis one does not succeed in freeing oneself from it. One remains governed by it. So, for example, whether one opposes infinity and finitude or posits a pure infinity (or for that matter eternity), Hegel's response is the same: one is placing infinity in opposition to the finite, and thereby infinity has been made as finite as finitude itself (cf. *GW* 4.322). It is from this perspective that Hegel argues that "In the Idea finite and infinite are one" (*GW* 4.324/Hegel 1977b, p. 66), from which the conclusion must be drawn that finitude as such has vanished, at least as something that has truth and reality in and for itself. One consequence is that whatever "Hegel without metaphysics" means, it cannot mean a Hegel who opposes metaphysics. From a Hegelian perspective the remedy that is called for is "the absolute suspension/sublation (*Aufgehobensein*) of opposition" (*GW* 4.324/Hegel 1977b, p. 68). Although it was the ambition of the Kantian critical philosophy to leave behind dogmatic metaphysics, Hegel's riposte in *Faith and Knowledge* was that its attempt to construct itself into a

new system of transcendental philosophy passed over into a new dogmatism (cf. *GW* 4.33).

To put it another way, when *Faith and Knowledge* is read as a sourcebook for Hegel's early critique of Kant, Jacobi and Fichte, it is being assimilated to the very model of negative argumentation which it was the purpose of the *Critical Journal* to replace, as explained by the Introduction to the first issue. Hegel and Schelling there announced that the task of the new periodical was to introduce a new way of examining philosophers. Critique had hitherto taken the form of a negative destruction or shattering (*Zerschlagen*) or *Raisonnieren* (cf. *GW* 4.5), instead of serving as a preparation for the arrival of true philosophy (cf. *GW* 4.127). Or, as he explained in *Faith and Knowledge*, the Kantian limitation of philosophy to the task of "a critique of the cognitive faculties" (*GW* 4.326/Hegel 1997b, p. 68) amounts to a restriction of reason, and Hegel records the judgment that arises from this perspective: "all so-called philosophy comes down to a mere delusion of supposed rational insight" (*GW* 4.327–8/Hegel 1977b, p. 69).

These lessons have not been lost on much contemporary philosophy. The recognition that when two terms are opposed neither of them exists for itself in abstraction from the other, that "each of the opposites, considered singly, is nothing" (*GW* 4.325/Hegel 1977b, p. 68), is, for example, the same logic that is adopted by both Heidegger and Derrida as they attempt to pursue what is sometimes, albeit misleadingly, called "the overcoming of metaphysics." Because one cannot leave metaphysics behind by opposing it, one cannot simply slam the door shut on it and take a step in the supposedly free air outside of it. To be sure, Hegel plays a central role in what Heidegger and Derrida understood as the overcoming of metaphysics and not only because Hegel was the preeminent thinker of Western philosophy as a unity. In *Of Grammatology* Derrida called Hegel the last philosopher of the book and the first thinker of writing (cf. Derrida 1967, p. 41). In other words, Hegel can be read – and from this perspective can only be read – in a double way. And this is my second point, which is that what came to be called "double reading" in the context of Derridean deconstruction, as a way of negotiating the problem of twisting free of the logic of opposition, was a strategy already introduced by Hegel in *Faith and Knowledge* (cf. Bernasconi 1988, p. 24–5).

Already in the Preface to the *Differenzschrift* Hegel insisted that there were two sides to both Kant and Fichte, the spirit and the letter. The spirit of Kant's philosophy is located in the principle of the deduction of the categories, but Kant betrays this spirit in the form of his philosophy, argumentation. Or, more precisely, because argumentation is not philosophical, Kant turns his back on the genuinely philosophical aspect of his thinking, by opposing the idea to

being, that is to say, by embracing human finitude (cf. *GW* 4.5–6). The arguments of ratiocinative reflection (*raisonnierende Reflexion*) belong to the letter of Kant's philosophy whereas the purely speculative principle is the spirit of Kant (cf. *GW* 4.5). To concentrate on the former is to confine oneself to negative argumentation, but philosophy proper belongs with the latter, which is, according to Hegel in this text, the path that Fichte follows. In *Faith and Knowledge* Hegel gave a series of double readings of Kantian propositions following the lines already set out in the *Differenzschrift*, for example, the proposition "that the intellect is something subjective and that there are only appearances for it and not things in themselves" (*GW* 4.334). Insofar as it accords an absoluteness of finitude and appearance in the human being, Kant is read in accordance with the principle of subjectivity. But Kant can also be read according to the Idea of reason, whereby we find in this statement a recognition that the understanding intellect expresses the principle of opposition and the abstraction of finitude. The Idea of authentic apriority may be found in the Kantian notion of the transcendental imagination and in the beginning of the Idea of reason in the intellect (cf. *GW* 4.334).

It is the same with Fichte as Hegel read him in the *Differenzschrift*: there is one reading by which Fichte's philosophy is "an authentic product of speculation" (*GW* 4.77/Hegel 1977a, p. 173) and a second reading whereby speculation abandons itself as it evolves into a system and becomes reflection (cf. *GW* 4.6–7/Hegel 1977a, p. 81). In the *Differenzschrift* Hegel announced unambiguously the principle of such a double reading: "the two standpoints, that of speculation and that of reflection, are absolutely necessary and without union at the center of the system" (*GW* 4.37/Hegel 1977a, p. 122). Fichte's famous starting-point of the $I = I$ may serve as an illustration. Hegel finds here an expression of identity which makes it the absolute principle of speculation, but he insists that it can equally be read as the principle of subjective philosophical reflection because it remains opposed to empirical consciousness, the I which is related to that which is non- I (cf. *GW* 4:42). On this second reading, the $I = I$ must be supplemented by further principles and indeed that is the course taken by Fichte's system itself (*GW* 4.38). So " $I = I$ is the absolute principle of speculation, but the system does not display this identity" (*GW* 4.37). As Hegel put it in *Faith and Knowledge*, the principle $I = I$ plays a 'double role' (*gedoppelte Rolle*) in the *Wissenschaftslehre* – both as absolute and as the point of departure for the entire empirical infinity (see *GW* 4.390). So there is nothing artificial about my introduction of the phrase "double reading" here. The basis on which Hegel describes the history of philosophy as "the history of the one, eternal Reason, presenting itself in infinitely manifold forms" (*GW* 4.31/Hegel 1977a, p. 114) is summarized by him in the *Differenzschrift* with the single word *Duplicität*. He explains it as

follows: “the Absolute must posit itself in the appearance itself, i.e., it must not nullify appearance but must construct it into identity” (GW 4.32/Hegel 1977a, p. 115).

But, thirdly, *Faith and Knowledge* is a text about the state of philosophy at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Many people today look back at that time as a high point of philosophy with Kant himself still alive and Kantianism in the ascendancy. This was not Hegel's judgment. In the *Differenzschrift* he condemned “the unphilosophical tendencies of the age” and the mishandling that philosophy had suffered at the hands of Kant and Fichte (cf. GW 4.7–8/Hegel 1977a, p. 83). In large measure, this was, on his account, because philosophy no longer answered to the needs of its time.⁹ Kant's language failed to express the speculative because it derived from a culture that is past (*vergangen*) – the translation says “dead” (GW 4.364/Hegel 1977a, p. 120). It is important to understand why this is the case, because it is possible that philosophy today equally does not answer the needs of the time and perhaps for this very reason exalts Kantian philosophy.

According to the conception of philosophical criticism introduced by Schelling and Hegel in the *Critical Journal*, what was to be subjected to criticism was not to be seen simply as an expression of individuality but in terms of “the universal highway or military road (*allgemeine Heerstrasse*) of *Kultur*” (GW 4.121/Hegel and Schelling 1985, p. 279). To subject something to critique is not to see it as an expression of individuality but as a manifestation of *Kultur* as the Cartesian philosophy was an expression of the culture of its time. Schelling and Hegel use this same notion of culture to deny the autonomy of philosophy. Philosophy is at the mercy of its times and its culture. Hence, according to *Faith and Knowledge* the philosopher must try to identify the need of the time insofar as acceptance of a philosophical system arises “because what it articulates is already present in the time's inner core” (GW 4.8/Hegel 1977a, p. 82). This is why Hegel begins *Faith and Knowledge* by relating the philosophies of Kant, Jacobi, and Fichte to the “system of culture” to which they belonged, which he argued was for them the spirit of Protestantism (GW 4.319/Hegel 1977b, p. 60). For this reason Hegel in the same text called time “all powerful” (*allmächtig*) with reference to philosophy, albeit he added almost immediately that in philosophy “the actual and the temporal disappear” (GW 4.323/Hegel 1977b, p. 65). Or, and it means the same thing, the status of finitude as truth or as absolute vanishes.

⁹ Hegel did not introduce this criterion. A version of it is found in Jacobi's idea of a living philosophy that expresses the content of the age and on that basis he singles out Helvetius and Diderot. See Jacobi 1785, p. 185. See also GW 14/1.15 and GW 15.139.

These ideas are central to Hegel's philosophy. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit* Hegel wrote of the annulment of time (*PhG* GW 9.429). In the *Differenzschrift* he wrote of the suspension (*Aufhebung*) of all time, its infinitization (*Verunendlichung*) (GW 4.29/Hegel 1977a, p. 112). The need for philosophy is always a "need of the time" (GW 4.13/Hegel 1977a, p. 90), but in the same text he explained that "the source of the need for philosophy" is "dichotomy" (*Entzweiung*) to which the answer, as we have seen, is duplicity (GW 4.12/Hegel 1977a, p. 89). This reminds us that the question "Hegel without metaphysics?" is less a question about Hegel than a question about the state of philosophy today.

III

The question "Hegel without metaphysics?" is in many ways a contemporary reformulation of Croce's old question of what is living and dead in Hegel (Croce 1915). The question of what is living and dead in Hegel today is not to be answered in terms of the philosophy of our time, whether it be analytical philosophy or continental philosophy, but in terms of whether it answers to the needs of the time. This is the standard Hegel employed when he judged Kant and everything before him as obsolete. So in his foreword to Hinrich's book, Hegel wrote: "Critical or Kantian philosophy is, to be sure, no less than the Enlightenment something that its name brands as obsolete" (GW 15.132/Hegel 1997, p. 161). This was not the obsolescence of change for the sake of change, but the need for philosophy to change because the *needs* of the time had changed. Hegel believed in 1822 that he had already won the argument on faith, but it had not made any vital difference because it was a virtually universal prejudice of his culture (*Bildung*) that we know nothing about God who has been elevated above all determination, beyond all knowing. Hegel identified this as the Kantian position and conceded its ubiquity among his contemporaries:

It is of no help to have refuted Kantian philosophy or destroyed it: the progress and presumptions of progress beyond it may have busied themselves with much else in their own way, but they are only the same worldly wisdom as that of Kantian philosophy, for they deny to spirit the capacity and the vocation for objective truth. (GW 15.134/Hegel 1997, p. 163)

Here Hegel conceded that beyond the technical philosophical debate, in which he naturally declared himself the winner, there were cultural issues. That is why this is the criterion we must apply to Hegel himself and do so in terms of the needs of the time, which is not a question of *Kultur* but *Bildung*. Hegel allowed that as time moves on, as culture changes, philosophical expression

changes, but not philosophy itself. That is his central claim and that is what the attempt at reading him freed of metaphysics fails to recognize. Hegel is a way of thinking and reading.

Hegel himself addressed the question of what was living and dead in the philosophy of his own time in *Faith and Knowledge* by recounting theatrically a series of deaths. As *Faith and Knowledge* opens, the curtain is drawn back to reveal two corpses on the stage: the Enlightenment opposition of faith and reason has taken the life from both of them. Philosophy had been for generations subservient to theology, but during the Enlightenment, philosophy had fought back and had seemingly gained the upper hand. However, in the course of the struggle it was itself mortally wounded along with its rival. In the first paragraph Hegel writes: “what used to be regarded as the death of philosophy, that Reason should renounce its existence in the Absolute, excluding itself totally from it and relating itself to it only negatively, became now the zenith of philosophy” (GW 4.316/Hegel 1977b, p. 56). Judged by the standards that hitherto prevailed, philosophy is dead and this is a consequence of the death of reason. It seemed on the face of it that there was no victor and what was left alive were only imposters, a sham faith and a sham reason. One could not look at the work performed by the Kantian critical philosophy and shout: “Faith and Reason are dead. Long live Faith and Reason.” Hegel’s own considered assessment was as follows: “The new born peace that hovers triumphantly over the corpse (*Leichnamen*) of reason and faith, uniting them as a child of both, has as little of reason in it as it has of authentic faith” (GW 4.315/Hegel 1977b, p. 55). However, when Hegel paused to identify the corpse precisely, he recognized that what had died is philosophy as dogmatic metaphysics and, as I explained earlier, this is now understood by Hegel as including Kantianism because of its dogmatic rejection of the metaphysics that preceded it. In its apparent victory, Kantian philosophy had emptied itself of all content. It had left itself nothing on which to exercise its critical faculties. No progress is made so long as one continues to deny spirit “the capacity and the vocation for objective truth” (GW 15.134/Hegel 1997, p. 163). Hegel’s blunt way of saying this in this same text is, as quoted above: “Critical or Kantian philosophy is, to be sure, no less than the Enlightenment, something that its name brands as obsolete” (GW 15.132/Hegel 1997, p. 161).

But, as in a Victorian melodrama, the most dramatic death scene comes at the end. In the final paragraph of *Faith and Knowledge* a further death is announced: “God himself is dead.” To our ears, the announcement that “God is dead” evokes the thought of atheism, and we know that at this time in Jena the *Atheismsstreit* was still reverberating. But Hegel went out of his way to present it otherwise. He wrote that the feeling “God is dead” was formerly only in

culture (*Bildung*) historically, and not speculatively, and that it was from the historical perspective that one could say that modern religion rests on it (GW 4.413–4/Hegel 1977b, p. 190). He explained in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* in Berlin in 1827 that the line was taken from an old Lutheran hymn and went on to explain that it expressed “an awareness that the human, the fragile, the weak, the negative are themselves a moment of the divine, that they are within God himself, that finitude, negativity, otherness are not outside of God and do not, as otherness, hinder unity with God” (VRel GW 5.249/Hegel 1985, p. 326).¹⁰ In *Faith and Knowledge* consciousness of this loss is the precondition for the “highest totality” achieving “its resurrection solely from this harsh consciousness of loss” (GW 4.414/Hegel 1977b, p. 191). Hegel thereby transferred this truth from religion to philosophy and from the history of culture to speculation. Hence the translation of the historical Good Friday into a speculative Good Friday.

The death of God is not a consequence of an alleged death of faith. Indeed, Hegel made it clear that this knowledge of the death of God was retained only in and by faith. Faith abandons the sphere of finitude. Hegel wrote: “In true faith the whole sphere of finitude, of being-something-on-one’s-own-account, the sphere of sensibility, sinks into nothing before the thinking and intuition of the eternal” (GW 4.379/Hegel 1977b, p. 141). Indeed, the death of God is the basis on which Hegel announces the possibility of the resurrection of philosophy, which is why it is crucial to clarify its meaning here. In the Christian narrative God died to save us from our sins. On Hegel’s account, God died to save philosophy from the Enlightenment. Or, more precisely, God died to save us from the Enlightenment’s self-portrayal, its self-understanding, because the Enlightenment misunderstood itself.

Jacobi is often criticized for not being able to keep up with his more sophisticated contemporaries, but he seems to have understood Hegel on this point. When in 1803 Jacobi responded to *Faith and Knowledge*, he took up the theme of death: “That a philosophy which is the death of philosophy is brought to death and destroyed just in the nick of time by philosophy is in the strictest sense philosophically just. The triune inventors of even this death”—Jacobi meant Kant, Fichte, and himself—“will not be able to have anything against it ... They die as redeemers of the human race” (Jacobi 2004, p. 343; Jacobi 1987, p. 149). However, in a note Jacobi recognized that Hegel had used him to strike Fichte and Kant dead, before killing him off too (Jacobi 2004, p. 338–9n; Jacobi

10 E. Jüngel has established that the act of quoting the hymn had a history: Jüngel 1977, p. 85n.

1987, p. 145n). It seems as if Jacobi was confessing to at least two of the murders, but pointing his finger at Hegel as his own assassin. Jacobi's admission was filled with even more irony given the rumors that had circulated in the newspapers in 1786 that Jacobi's book on Spinoza had in effect been responsible for Moses Mendelssohn's death as a result of his publishing a report of his conversations with Lessing without warning before Mendelssohn's own book on Lessing came out (Altmann 1973, p. 744–9).

Hegel did not confess to bringing about the death of the philosophy of subjectivity. He presented himself at most as a witness or, perhaps better, the investigating officer who appears after the bodies have been found. The deaths of a certain faith and a certain reason are not a result Hegel brought about. His task was simply to determine the meaning of those deaths that had already taken place. The Enlightenment, which presented itself as a victory for the autonomy of reason, was in fact nothing of the sort, insofar as the philosophies of Kant, Jacobi, and Fichte all retained something beyond reason. Their testimony could not be trusted. In Hegel's view the philosophies that presented themselves as exercises of autonomous reason were in fact not exercising reason at all, but exorcising it, because they had reduced reason to mere intellect (*Verstand*). Hegel repeated this thought that 'God is dead' in his so-called *Wastebook* from between 1803 and 1806. "God sacrifices himself, gives himself up to annihilation (*Vernichtung*). God himself is dead; the highest despair (*Verzweiflung*) of complete abandonment by God" (*GW* 5.505).¹¹ This shows that when Hegel announced the death of God, he was looking beyond the crucifixion to the death of the transcendent God.

It is not the man Jesus Christ who dies, but the divinity. Hegel was clear about this in a note to the *Vorlesungsmanuskript zur Realphilosophie* of 1805–06: "It is not the man who dies—but the *divine* that thereby becomes man" (*GW* 8.283).¹² This marginal note allows one to see the crucifixion rather than the incarnation as the focus because it is in the taking on of death that "the sacrifice of divinity," in the sense of an abstract essence beyond, happens. These were Hegel's first expressions of the death of God to which he subsequently returned in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and, as we have seen, in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. It is, as the *Phenomenology* puts it, the death of the abstraction of the divine being, that is, the death of the opposition between the within and the beyond (*PhG GW* 9.419). Clearly if there was to be a suspension of oppositions, there had to be a nullification of the transcendent or the outside

¹¹ See Works Cited: Hegel 1998.

¹² See Works Cited: Hegel 1976.

along these lines. But the death of God did not constitute a halt to religion or faith. Indeed, in the final analysis, *Faith and Knowledge* is not a work of mourning. There are deaths certainly – the deaths of faith and reason, the death of a culture, and the death of God – but by the end these deaths of the old dispensation are made to feel more like a birth, the birth of true philosophy. There is an end therefore, but also a beginning.

A Hegel without metaphysics is a Hegel read through the eyes of Kant. It is not a trim slimmed-down Hegel; it is the corpse of Hegel, a cadaver. I have tried to explain why I think Hegel is better summarized as saying: “Metaphysics is dead. Long live metaphysics,” but I have also tried to suggest why the culture of our time is drawn to the possibility of a Hegel without metaphysics. In saying that I am no longer referring to those contemporary, largely Anglophone, commentators who have employed that phrase, but to the Hegel of continental philosophy. Continental philosophers are well aware of the onto-theological constitution of metaphysics as it operates within Hegel, but they still accept many of Hegel’s lessons, lessons that I have sought to explore in this essay through a reading of certain moments in *Faith and Knowledge*. If students of Heidegger and Derrida have renounced the idea of a simple step outside of metaphysics, where metaphysics means the history of Western metaphysics in its unity, then the main obstacle to a simple solution, the idea that one could claim to be outside of metaphysics, is given to us by Hegel himself. We may wish to be rid of the history of Western metaphysics for many reasons, including the fact that it is saturated with ideas that are racist, sexist, Eurocentric, and violent. But for now and the foreseeable future we cannot free ourselves from metaphysics and for the same reason we cannot rid ourselves from Hegel, who helps us to understand the predicament within which we find ourselves. From this perspective, the dream of a Hegel without metaphysics is an unnecessary distraction.

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Paul Giladi

Hegel's Metaphysics as Speculative Naturalism

The double aim of this essay is, first, to reject the notion that one can ascribe no metaphysical commitments to Hegel, and, second, to argue that the kind of metaphysics one ought to ascribe to Hegel is of a robust yet immanent or naturalist variety. I begin by exploring two reasons why one may think Hegel's philosophical system has no metaphysical commitments. I argue that one of these reasons is based on a particular understanding of Hegel as a post-Kantian philosopher, whereas the second reason is centred on a particular understanding of the philosophical viability of metaphysics as a form of enquiry *simpliciter*. My discussion of these reasons for regarding Hegel in a non-metaphysical way concludes with a rejection of conceiving Hegelianism without metaphysics. I then move on to address what I take to be the more pertinent and serious issue of what kind of metaphysician Hegel is. To this end, I argue that the best way of understanding Hegelian metaphysics is by conceiving of it as a combination of Aristotelian first philosophy and Kantian critique. To put this in the form of a slogan: Hegel's metaphysics is a form of speculative naturalism.

I

An important feature of the re-engagement with Hegelianism in the Anglophone world since the mid-1970s consists of various attempts to undermine the traditional and long-standing assumption that Hegel is a metaphysical thinker.¹ By “metaphysical thinker” I mean, to take my lead from J. Lowe's definition of metaphysics, someone who makes *a priori* enquiries into the fundamental structure of reality as a whole (Lowe 2002, p. 2–3). As Bowman writes, “some of the most sympathetic and influential commentators on Hegel's system have sought to demonstrate that Hegel can and should be read as espousing no metaphysical doctrines at all” (Bowman 2013, p. 2). In other words, we can and should under-

1 Whilst there have been numerous anti-metaphysical readings of Hegel in the Anglophone world, particularly in North America, this interpretation has found almost no support in German scholarship on Hegel. For example, Henrich 1982, Horstmann 1991, and Koch 2007 all conceive of Hegel as a metaphysician of some variety.

stand Hegel without metaphysics.² The question then is, what is the motivation for regarding Hegel without metaphysics? There are many explanations for why some philosophers are forcefully inclined to dismiss any metaphysical reading of Hegel's idealism, and I cannot do them all justice in the space of this essay. However, I would like to discuss two motivations for the non-metaphysical interpretation.

The first concerns Hegel's status as a post-Kantian thinker. As is well-known, one of Kant's principal aims in the *Critique of Pure Reason* is to establish the limits of human cognition and thereby provide a new foundation for metaphysical enquiry. Kant sees metaphysics as dependent on certain established epistemological principles about what human beings can and cannot know. This means that our conception of metaphysics relies on the kind of epistemological principles we establish, and on how our cognition can (as it invariably does) go wrong. Though Kant defines metaphysics as the cognitive enterprise that aims to grasp the unconditioned (the infinite) through pure reason (cf. *KrV* B7, 378–88, 395), one should not take such utterances to exhaust Kant's understanding of the discipline, for he relies on the traditional distinction between 'general' and 'special' metaphysics (*metaphysica generalis* and *metaphysica specialis*).

General metaphysics or ontology is concerned with the nature and our cognition of objects in general, whereas special metaphysics is concerned with our cognition of a particular class of objects, such as God, the world, and the self of rational psychology as presented by Descartes, Leibniz, Wolff, and others. Given that general and special metaphysics have different objects of enquiry, each discipline makes a specific error, which Kant exposes in a unique way. With regard to general metaphysics, Kant argues that philosophers such as Leibniz and Wolff hold that one can acquire knowledge of objects in general through either the laws of general logic, such as the principle of non-contradiction, or through the pure concepts of the understanding, i.e., the concepts of transcendental

² Helpful overviews of non-metaphysical interpretations are Kreines 2006 and Redding 2007. The most influential anti-metaphysical interpreters are Findlay 1958, Hartmann 1972, Pinkard 1994, and Brandom 1994, 1999, 2000, 2002, 2009; see also Buchdahl 1984, 1985 and Kolb 1986. Findlay suggests that Hegel's concerns are restricted to providing an explanatory criterion which regards teleology as indispensable for our understanding of nature. Hartmann interprets Hegel as a category theorist developing a conceptual framework for meaningful discourse about objects of experience. Pinkard presents Hegel as a social epistemologist concerned with the development of norms through social interaction. Brandom interprets Hegel as a normative inferentialist who aims to ground an inferential conception of meaning on the logical notions of mediation and determinate negation. Pippin's past works (e.g., Pippin 1989) are normally regarded as the flagship anti- or non-metaphysical Hegel interpretation, but his more recent statements show that he does in fact regard Hegel as a metaphysician.

logic. The error of general metaphysics, then, in accordance with one of the principles of Kant's 'discursivity thesis' (namely, that concepts without intuitions are empty), consists in holding that the un-schematised use of categorial concepts, i.e., the application of concepts independently of the conditions of sensibility, establishes knowledge of objects. As Kant famously states, a consequence of acknowledging this error is that "the proud name of ontology, which presumes to offer synthetic *a priori* cognitions of things in general...must give way to the more modest title of a transcendental analytic" (*KrV* A247/B304). What this means is that, given the failure of general metaphysics (due to its dogmatism) to both explain and justify synthetic *a priori* knowledge, the only viable means of adequately explaining and justifying this kind of knowledge is to provide a transcendental analysis of our cognitive capacities.

The error of special metaphysics, whilst not fundamentally different from that of general metaphysics, consists in the fact that judgements concerning God, the world, and the immortal and immaterial self are infected with transcendental illusion, i.e., the conflation of our cognitive interests and the conceptual features of certain phenomena, on the one hand, with the determination of things in themselves, on the other. For example, our judgements about the self being a simple, immaterial substance are based on the illegitimate conflation of conceptual properties of the self (simplicity, unity, and subjectivity) with a metaphysic of the self as a simple substance. In other words: we commit the fallacy of hypostatisation when we think about the self from the perspective of rational psychology. According to Kant, rational psychology is indeed just one of the branches of special metaphysics that is infected with various fallacies such as paralogisms, amphibolies, subreption and hypostatisation. These formal errors also permeate our cognitive practices when we engage with the questions and methodologies of rational cosmology and rational theology. Metaphysics as a science then, at least in this sense, is impossible and philosophically pernicious. If metaphysics is to be possible and philosophically virtuous, it must abandon its cognitive aspirations in theoretical philosophy and be far more limited and modest.

Hegel on his part does endorse Kant's rejection of rational psychology and of pre-critical metaphysical commitments and methodology (cf. *Enc* § 34 A, § 379 A, § 389, § 389 A). Furthermore, Hegel's hostility to intellectual intuition and supernaturalism in the Jena period³ and his endorsement of Kant's critique of Leibniz

³ One can also regard features of the Preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and the "inverted world" thesis in "Force and Understanding," to amount to a critique of transcendent metaphysics.

and others in the Berlin period appear to jointly indicate that speculation beyond the bounds of experience is for him not just fallacious, but philosophically pernicious (see Moore 2012, p. 166). As if this were not enough, Hegel writes to Goethe on 24 February 1821 that “we philosophers have a common enemy, metaphysics” (*Briefe* II, p. 251).⁴ Presented with this textual evidence, there seems to be reasons for considering Hegel as an anti-metaphysical thinker. Pippin writes: “how could he ...have enthusiastically agreed with Kant that the metaphysics of the ‘beyond,’ of substance, and of traditional views of God and infinity were forever discredited, and then...promptly created a systematic metaphysics as if he had never heard of Kant’s critical epistemology. Just attributing moderate philosophic intelligence to Hegel should at least make one hesitate before construing him as a post-Kantian philosopher with a precritical metaphysics.” (Pippin 1989, p. 7)

However, such an inference does not in fact follow. First, whilst it cannot be denied that Hegel rejects traditional metaphysics, the implication does not hold that he is therefore a philosopher engaged in a project either continuous with transcendental idealism or aiming to tweak elements of Kant’s transcendentalism, in order to ensure that metaphysics be properly laid to rest. Such implication is based on an oversimplification of the concept of post-Kantianism. We discern this in Houlgate’s comment that “for Hegel the imperative for all post-Kantian philosophy is not, as Pippin maintains, to avoid direct claims about being-in-itself and to restrict oneself to determining the ‘conditions of the possibility of knowledge.’ It is to be radically self-critical and to avoid arbitrary assumptions” (Houlgate, forthcoming). What Houlgate is claiming is partly bound up with his concern for the presuppositionlessness of Hegel’s philosophy. However, what is more relevant to my discussion here is Houlgate’s insistence that the essence of post-Kantianism is not simply an endorsement of replacing the *a priori* science of being *qua* being with the *a priori* science of transcendental judgement (a replacement which one can take to be the spirit of the Copernican turn), but is rather a commitment to fundamentally self-reflective and rational forms of enquiry. What I mean by this is the following. The reason why Hegel is enthusiastic about Kant’s devastation of dogmatic general metaphysics and of special metaphysics is not that he takes the Transcendental Analytic and Transcendental Dialectic to signify the destruction of metaphysics *tout court*. Rather, he sees the analysis and systematic undermining of traditional rationalism to have opened the way for a thoroughly critical approach to the problems of philosophy. For Hegel, the shift from Leibnizian-Wolffian rationalist metaphysics to

⁴ Works Cited: Hegel 1969.

transcendental idealism does not culminate in any kind of eliminativism or crude naturalism, but in the insight that both metaphysics and transcendental philosophy can now be transformed into speculative philosophy. Hence, when Pippin writes that after the *Critique of Pure Reason* “instead of an *a priori* science of substance, a science of ‘how the world must be,’ ... a putative philosophical science was directed to the topic of how any subject must ‘for itself’ take or construe or *judge the world to be*” (Pippin 1990, p. 839), his understanding of the thrust of post-Kantianism is too narrow. As Bowman writes: “*Post Kant* is not necessarily *propter Kant*” (Bowman 2013, p. 3). For Hegel, then, the upshot of Kant’s critique of metaphysics is that traditional metaphysics must be revised so as to make metaphysics *tout court* respectable and worth pursuing once more.

One could be forgiven, however, for being confused about Hegel’s apparent contempt for yet also apparent embrace of metaphysics. To remedy such a situation, I think it is helpful to draw a distinction that Hegel himself does not in fact clearly draw, but one which I am inclined to suppose he would accept: Hegel is dismissive of metaphysics only with regard to the ‘narrow’ kind propagated by the scholasticism of Wolff and his followers. This conception of metaphysics is committed to the notion that the categories of traditional *metaphysica generalis* constitute the fundamental structure of reality and that we can adequately make sense of each category without reference to any other category. The kind of metaphysics Hegel favours, though, appears to be a ‘broader’ kind, which claims that “what the objects genuinely are is brought before consciousness, through *thinking about them*” (*Enc* § 26).⁵ This conception of metaphysics is committed to the notion that the categories of traditional *metaphysica generalis* must undergo systematic and reflective critique and that our *categorical* conceptual structure must be ultimately supplanted by a speculative form of cognition and a dialectical form of logic. In Bowman’s words: “Speculative philosophy is a systematic critique and overcoming of traditional ontological (categorical) thought in service of an alternative, revisionary metaphysics Hegel calls ‘speculative science’” (Bowman 2013, p. 7). To quote Hegel himself on this subject: “Philosophical thinking has its own peculiar forms...Speculative logic contains the older logic and metaphysics; it preserves the same forms of thought, laws, and objects, but it develops and transforms them with further categories” (*Enc* § 9, § 9R).

Having discussed the first reason for thinking that Hegel is not a metaphysician, one which rests on a rather oversimplified and narrow understanding of

5 Citations refer to the Geraets/Suchting/Harris translation (Works Cited: Hegel 1991).

the critique of metaphysics⁶ and of post-Kantianism, I now turn to the second reason for thinking that Hegel is not a metaphysician.

Whilst the motivation for reading Hegel without metaphysics may be based on his relationship to Kant, one can argue for a non-metaphysical or anti-metaphysical reading of Hegel on different grounds. I have previously noted that some of the most sympathetic Anglophone commentators argue that Hegel is best understood without metaphysics because ascribing to him metaphysical commitments would condemn him to irrelevancy. For example, there seems to be reason to think that if we conceive of Hegel's philosophy in a metaphysical way, then we interpret his doctrines in a manner eerily similar to the metaphysics of the right-Christian Hegelians, with their penchants for conceptually elaborate theological landscapes. Because of the philosophically problematic nature of theological metaphysics, however, this is itself a reason to not consider Hegel as a metaphysician. Of course this kind of argument for the anti-metaphysical Hegel is very weak: it is not the case that every metaphysical interpretation of Hegel necessarily leads to an elaborate theological understanding of his idealism. There are plenty of metaphysical readings of Hegel's work that have no commitment at all to any kind of right-Hegelian position. A stronger and more interesting argument for Hegel without metaphysics can be made by re-thinking why exactly the ascription of metaphysical commitments to his philosophy would condemn him to irrelevancy. Such an argument can be proposed on meta-metaphysical grounds. The point is not that regarding Hegel as a metaphysician leads to regarding him as an outlandish theologian (and hence to irrelevancy). The point is that conceiving of Hegel as a metaphysician is deeply problematic in view of the fact that the discipline of metaphysics is engendered by a variety of philosophical pathologies. Those philosophers with positivist or eliminativist attitudes toward metaphysics as a discipline have held the putative queen of the sciences, as Stern puts it, to be "consigned to ... the oblivion of meaninglessness" (Stern 2009, p. 2).⁷ According to these interpreters, metaphysics is gripped by so many *maladies intellectuelles* that the kind of enquiry it advocates is deemed impossible. Therefore, at least with regard to Hegel, if there is any philosophical significance to his philosophy it has nothing to do with the mystical

6 Cf. Beiser 2005, p. 55: "There is indeed much truth behind the non-metaphysical interpretations ... On the other hand ... [i]f Hegel abjured metaphysics as a science of the transcendent, he still pursued it as a science of the immanent...For Hegel, the problem with traditional metaphysics is not that it attempted to know the infinite, but that it had a *false interpretation* of the infinite as something transcending the finite world of ordinary experience."

7 Note that Stern does not embrace the eliminativist attitude to metaphysics. I am merely using his helpful description of the eliminativist attitude.

shell of metaphysics, but rather with the rational core of his *corpus*, i.e., with his social philosophy and his analysis of logical categories.⁸ Furthermore, the anti-metaphysical school of thought can make its case not simply by relying on early movements in the analytic tradition such as Logical Empiricism and the 'linguistic turn.' It can find meta-metaphysical support from contemporary scientific naturalism, reductionism, and experimental philosophy.

The obvious question we now have to ask is whether or not it is plausible to think that metaphysics as a philosophical discipline is possible. To answer this, I would like to first consider two passages from Hegel's corpus:

Ancient metaphysics had in this respect a higher conception of thinking than is current today. For it based itself on the fact that the knowledge of things obtained through thinking is alone what is really true in them, that is, things not in their immediacy but as first raised into the form of thought, as things *thought*...But *reflective* understanding took possession of philosophy...Directed against reason, it behaves as ordinary common sense and imposes its view that truth rests on sensuous reality, that thoughts are *only* thoughts, meaning that it is sense perception which first gives them filling and reality and that reason left to its own resources engenders only figments of the brain. In this self-renunciation on the part of reason, the Notion of truth is lost; it is limited to knowing only subjective truth, phenomena, appearances, only something to which the nature of the object itself does not correspond: knowing has lapsed into opinion. (WL GW 21.29–30) ⁹

What Hegel means by claiming that ancient metaphysics had a "higher conception of thinking" is unclear and easily misinterpreted. Rather than reading his affection for ancient metaphysics to amount to a straightforward desire to resurrect every single aspect of pre-Kantian metaphysics, we should read Hegel as making the following claim: ancient metaphysics, *pace* empiricist positivism or scientism, understood the world as comprising ideal entities that provide unity and rational order to the content of our experience. These entities, crucially, are not objects that can be immediately perceived or empirically verified in the same way as one can immediately perceive or empirically verify that a table or a chair exists. Rather, 'ideal' kinds such as universals and laws of nature are integral components of reality. They require us to identify certain properties of the world that are more basic than immediately observable sensible properties. An important consequence of this view is that if any philosopher is inclined to think that metaphysics *simpliciter* is intellectually bankrupt, then her philosophical commitments condemn her cognitive practices and intellectual endeavor.

⁸ The approach that regards social philosophy as the core value of Hegel's work can be found in the Marxist tradition and in the Frankfurt School.

⁹ Citations refer to the Miller translation (Works Cited: Hegel 1969).

ours to inadequacy and impoverishment. Hegel makes a similar critique of attitudes dismissive of metaphysics in another passage of the *Science of Logic*:

The fact is that there no longer exists any interest either in the form or the content of metaphysics or in both together...The exoteric teaching of the Kantian philosophy – that the understanding ought not to go beyond experience, else the cognitive faculty will become a theoretical reason which by itself generates nothing but fantasies of the brain – this was a justification from a philosophical quarter for the renunciation of speculative thought. In support of this popular teaching came the cry of modern educationists that the needs of the time demanded attention to immediate requirements, that just as experience was the primary factor for knowledge, so for skill in public and private life, practice and practical training generally were essential and alone necessary, theoretical insight being harmful even. Philosophy and ordinary common sense thus co-operating to bring about the downfall of metaphysics, there was seen the strange spectacle of a cultured nation without a metaphysics – like a temple richly ornamented in other respects but without a holy of holies. (WL GW 21.5)

Here, Hegel appears to blame Kant's "doctrine of humility" for (inadvertently) giving rise to the growing positivist and nominalist philosophic culture in early nineteenth-century Prussia. Hegel's ultimate worry, expressed in his opposition to the limitation of human knowledge, is that the subjectivism and relativism of formal idealism prevent us from developing speculative faculties to which Hegel is seriously committed as the key to grasping the rationality embedded in the structure of reality itself. Hegel is concerned about developing a system which is unrestrictive and entirely focused on the development of rationality, not because he believes human knowledge can be extended to transcendent things-in-themselves, but because for him the basic idea of setting limits serves as a check on human intellectual endeavour and creativity, both of which he regards as essential for human flourishing. In this respect, metaphysics is not only possible but indispensable to philosophical enquiry. Its indispensability does not merely consist in the ubiquitous presence of metaphysical statements in natural language,¹⁰ as Hegel writes: "Categories, like *being*, or *singularity*, are al-

10 See Ellis 2002 and Lowe 2006 for an excellent critique of anti-metaphysics. Perhaps what is even more interesting here is how Peirce appears to agree with Hegel on exactly this issue: "Find a scientific man who proposes to get along without any metaphysics – not by any means every man who holds the ordinary reasonings of metaphysicians to scorn – and you have found one whose doctrines are thoroughly vitiated by the crude and uncriticised metaphysics with which they are packed. We must philosophise, said the great naturalist Aristotle – if only to avoid philosophising. Every man of us has a metaphysics, and has to have one; and it will influence his life greatly ... Far better, then, that that metaphysics should be criticised and not be allowed to run loose." (Peirce 1931–58, 1.129). On this subject, see also Stern 2009.

ready mingled into every proposition, even when it has a completely sensible content: "This leaf is green" (*Enc* §3R). The indispensability of metaphysics also crucially consists in a broadly therapeutic need for metaphysics to provide us with access to the fundamental structure of reality and thus with the conceptual tools for being at home in the world. This is ultimately what I take to signify Hegel's most powerful meta-metaphysical argument, nicely expressed in the following passage from the *Encyclopaedia*:

It is true that Newton expressly warned physics to beware of metaphysics; but, to his honour, let it be said that he did not conduct himself in accordance with the warning at all. Only the animals are true blue physicists by this standard, since they do not think; whereas humans, in contrast, are thinking beings, and born metaphysicians. All that matters here is whether the metaphysics that is employed is of the right kind; and specifically whether, instead of the concrete logical Idea, we hold on to one-sided thought-determinations fixed by the understanding, so that they form the basis both of our theoretical and of our practical action. (*Enc* § 98 A)

We find here Hegel's dismissal of the question concerning whether metaphysics *tout court* is possible, and his insistence on asking the 'real' meta-metaphysical question: 'What kind of metaphysics is the right kind of metaphysics?' It is to this issue that I now turn.

II

The new meta-metaphysical challenge posed by Hegel amounts to a litmus test for any metaphysical system to not merely be theoretically satisfying but also practically significant in a specific manner. By 'theoretically satisfying' I mean a theory which accurately describes or represents the fundamental structure of reality. The specific sense of 'practical significance' I have in mind concerns a broadly therapeutic notion that our general understanding of how all things hang together enables us to achieve at-homeness in the world (cf. Sellars 1963, p. 35).

In other words, the kind of metaphysics we seek must be sufficiently inclusive (hence not "one-sided"). It will be a metaphysics of reason or speculative reflection (hence not "rigidly fixed by the understanding"). The distinction, therefore, between reason and understanding plays a significant role in the development of the right kind of metaphysics. Unlike Kant, Hegel does not claim that "these terms ... designate completely independent functions or faculties. Reason is simply the necessary result of the immanent movement of the understanding" (Beiser 2005, p. 164). In other words, reason is in some sense part of

understanding insofar as reason is a form of analytic explanation; in another sense, reason is distinct from the understanding insofar as the former is also a “form of holistic explanation, which shows how all finite things are parts of a wider whole” (Beiser 2005, p. 165). For Hegel, the principal advantage of drawing the distinction between reason and understanding is that it puts us in the position to be free from the various dualisms which inevitably follow from reflecting only from the perspective of the understanding, i.e., in purely analytical forms of reflection. What reason provides consciousness with is the means to avoid the pitfalls of dualisms and the problems of analysis through dialectical thought, i.e., by drawing distinctions yet establishing interconnectedness in a whole. A metaphysics which does not draw this distinction or one which conflates reason with understanding will therefore not be the right kind of metaphysics. This is because failing to draw the distinction or conflating the two results in a one-sided conception of thought and a purely mechanistic conception of philosophic explanation.

The question we now need to ask is which metaphysical tradition, if any, satisfies Hegel’s criteria for the right kind of metaphysics. Of course, a proper answer to such a question is effectively the task of a monograph. However, for the purposes of this essay I will briefly discuss two metaphysical theses. The first concerns the general metaphysical commitments of ancient Greek philosophy. Hegel writes:

A philosophy which ascribed veritable, ultimate, absolute being to finite existences as such, would not deserve the name of philosophy; the principles of ancient or modern philosophies, water, or matter, or atoms are *thoughts*, universals, ideal entities, not things as they immediately present themselves to us, that is, in their sensuous individuality – not even the water of Thales. For although this is also empirical water, it is at the same time also the *in-itself* or *essence* of all other things, too, and these other things are not self-subsistent or grounded in themselves, but are *posited* by, are *derived* from, an *other*, from water, that is, they are ideal entities. (WL GW 21.142)

For Hegel, what is attractive about ancient philosophy, as we also saw in a previously quoted passage from the Greater Logic, is its identification of thought with being, i.e., its general commitment to the fundamentally intelligible nature of reality. However, the basic deficiency of ancient metaphysics is its commitment to transcendent entities and relations.¹¹ Thus, for all of the attractive features of ancient metaphysics (its commitment to universals and the intelligible structure of reality) it falls short of the right kind of metaphysics. One may be inclined to suppose that the right kind of metaphysics Hegel is after will be pro-

11 On Aristotle’s metaphysical commitments see Lear 1988 and Stern 2008.

vided by immanentistic metaphysical traditions such as Spinozism. However, whilst this metaphysical tradition does have advantages on account of its broad naturalist commitments, Hegel thinks that it is still not the right kind of metaphysics. This is because the philosophical methodology of Spinozism, the *modo geometrico*, is not speculative enough: “No philosophical beginning could look worse than to begin with a definition, as Spinoza does” (*Differenz* p. 105; see also *PhG* § 48).¹²

Both ancient metaphysics and some species of immanent metaphysics have some attractive features for Hegel. To use A. Moore's expression, both traditions make concerted efforts to make sense of things (cf. Moore 2012, p. 1). However, it must equally be said that due to the respective failures of both metaphysical traditions, neither is ultimately able to properly “make sense of things.”

Sense-making for Hegelians would require a commitment to a form of naturalism that is both speculative and genuinely immanentist: neither a bifurcation of reality into two ontologically separate realms, nor a reduction of some phenomena to basic naturalistic components will do the philosophical work necessary to correctly understand the world we inhabit. What this speculative naturalism aims to accomplish, in its efforts to make sense of things, is to enable us to see, in Hegel's words, that “[t]he empirical is not only mere observing, hearing, feeling, perceiving particulars, but it also essentially consists in finding species, universals and laws” (*VGPh* p. 176).¹³

Not only is there reason to think that this approach is potentially the best way of understanding Hegel's metaphysics as a sophisticated *melange* of Aristotelianism, Spinozism, Kantianism and post-Kantian philosophy of nature; I also think we have excellent reasons to reject any attempt to read Hegel without metaphysics as doomed to meaninglessness: Hegel without metaphysics is simply not Hegel.

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¹² Citations of the *Differenzschrift* refer to the Cerf/Harris translation (Works Cited: Hegel 1977b); citations of *PhG*, to the Miller translation (Works Cited: Hegel 1977a).

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Susanne Herrmann-Sinai

Hegel's Metaphysics of Action

Introduction

When we conceive of ourselves as agents, we are thereby conceiving of ourselves as thinkers. This is so because when we act, we are not just doing something out of the blue. We are acting for good reasons, which are manifest in our actions. Any philosophical investigation into action thus has to be at the same time an investigation into thinking. If this were not the case, we would know ourselves from two different sources – as agents and as thinkers – and the question of how the identity of these different sources is to be established would be a further argumentative step to be taken. But if there was a further step to be taken, then a philosophical investigation into action would undermine its own authority to elucidate anything about us as the agents that we are, since philosophical investigation proceeds in thoughts and is done by us as the thinkers we are.

In this paper, I shall argue that Hegel's philosophy of action takes this consideration into account. In order to spell this out, I shall consider passages concerning intentional action in *Objective Spirit* (part three of the *Encyclopaedia*) and in the coextensive *Philosophy of Right* within their systematic context, which is predefined in the *Science of Logic*'s analysis of the Concept's self-determination. In effect, we shall be discovering Hegel's metaphysics of action.¹ I shall begin by suggesting that Hegel's notion of intentional action is characterized by two tensions. The first is the tension between action and deed, springing from the fact that an agent's activity can be read, from the individual's perspective, as realization of a subjective purpose (*Vorsatz*), but also judged at the same time, from a universal perspective, as the appropriate realization of a universal intention (*Absicht*). Action and deed are in tension because an action might be the proper realization of my subjective purpose (e.g., Oedipus considering his action as self-defense), yet still not be the realization of a true intention mediated by a law (e.g., Oedipus in fact committing patricide). This tension cannot be resolved within the chapter on Morality of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, where it is

¹ My title implies two directions. First, it implies that action as self-determination is key to understanding Hegel's post-Kantian metaphysical project. Second, it implies that a philosophical investigation of action ought to be self-conscious of its context within a system structured by this kind of metaphysics. It is the first step that shall concern us here. I attempt to reconstruct steps in the reverse direction in Herrmann-Sinai 2016.

introduced, although it can partly be overcome within Ethical Life (*Sittlichkeit*), where the ethical agent acts in accordance with the just institutions of public law that mediate the formation and realization of her intentions.²

The other tension related to Hegel's notion of action is that between subjectivity and objectivity within Objective Spirit, situated between Subjective and Absolute Spirit in part three of the *Encyclopaedia*. This tension springs from the fact that spirit's development is a striving to freely determine itself. However, within Objective Spirit it can only determine itself as the spirit of a particular people, which retains a moment of contingency because a people itself cannot determine its position within world history. Thus, the reality of objective spirit in a particular people cannot be adequate to spirit's free activity (cf. *Enc* § 553: "The concept of spirit has its reality in spirit").

For spirit to fully know and determine itself by no other means than its own activity, "intelligence must be liberated from its entanglement in social and political life" (Inwood 2007, p. 619, n. to *Enc* § 553). Hence, we cannot expect this second tension to be resolved within Objective Spirit (and in this regard, objective spirit is a "dead end": Peperzak 2001, p. 187–8). There thus remains a tension within the notion of action since it might only be accidentally that the community within which I act is one that in fact embodies *Sittlichkeit* as spirit's objective reality.

These two tensions suggest that Hegel's notion of action can only be fully understood within the context of the Philosophy of Spirit (including the section on Absolute Spirit that concludes with Philosophy), as well as within the context of his system (cf. *Enc* § 551). However, this methodological framework cannot be dogmatically postulated but ought to be philosophically legitimated. What has been said above about acting and thinking can help us do this. First, a philosophical investigation both proceeds by thinking and at the same time investigates thinking. These two occurrences of "thinking" ought not to be considered as mere homonyms of an accidental identity. Second, the kind of thinking that is the subject matter of a philosophical investigation of spirit must be understood as determining itself in our action. Thus, *the kind of thinking in which philosophy proceeds must be thought of as self-determining*. For otherwise, the fact that both occurrences are designated as "thinking" would either be a mere case of homonymy or we could not understand our thinking as manifest in our actions.

² We might say that this tension is partly resolved when the mediation (law) of spirit's self-determination (*via* the agent) is itself the product of spirit (the social community). This does not exclude that other conflicts, such as Antigone's, might appear within Ethical Life.

Hegel legitimates this thinking in his *Science of Logic*, in which thinking conceives of its own being as autonomously determining itself by way of a “syllogism.” Thinking can only properly conceive of itself if it is its own cause, freely causing its own product (see also Maker 2005 and Houlgate 2006). This argument of a *metaphysica generalis* (logic) is then particularized within Hegel's Philosophy of Spirit. Here Hegel argues that our acting can only be grasped as autonomous if our ability to be our own cause in acting intentionally is systematically linked to the Concept's free self-determination. Hence, within the *Science of Logic* we can locate what I would like to call Hegel's metaphysics of action. By linking Hegel's metaphysical thought to his philosophy of action we shall come to understand why the two above mentioned tensions are necessarily connected to Hegel's notion of action as developed in Objective Spirit. As we shall see, the latter particularizes the second premise of the Concept's syllogism, which is why it cannot fully resolve these tensions.

Reason as the Active Concept

Hegel's notion of the Concept serves as a substitute for Kant's notion of reason. The central thought upon which I base my argument in this essay is that Kant's question as to how reason as such can be practical turns into Hegel's task of understanding the self-determination of the Concept.³ Although I am not going much deeper into Kant's philosophy here, I suggest that it is this general question that motivates and shapes Hegel's philosophical project. However, while Kant discusses whether reason can be practical at all as a problem in conjunction with his discussion of personal autonomy and the will of finite beings, Hegel untangles these two aspects and systematically splits them up between the *Science of Logic* and the Philosophy of Spirit. Hegel thus is careful not to follow Kant's critical method of discussing practical reason. Instead, he addresses the general question as the central task of *prima philosophia*. It is through this portal of the Logic that he can later tackle the question of intentional, moral action by finite beings like ourselves in a Philosophy of Spirit, placed within the systematic context opened by the Logic. In this paper I only attempt to reconstruct the first step of this program by showing that Hegel took the primacy of practical reason in Kant (cf. *KpV* AA 5:120) as a methodological requirement

3 Cf. Longuenesse 2007, p. 181: “The *concept*, or Kant's pure practical (and theoretical) reason, should be understood against the background of this pre-discursive identity: against the background of Hegel's *reason*.”

for philosophical thinking far more seriously than Kant did.⁴ I take this to be Hegel's most decisive step beyond Kant. It enables Hegel to show that freedom's reality is not beyond the limitations of reason but, to the contrary, constitutes the very heart of reason's self-determination.

Kant and Hegel share the insight that if reason as such can be practical, it is free (cf. *KrV* A800/B828). But contrary to Kant, for whom freedom is the keystone (*Schlussstein*) of critical philosophy (cf. *KpV* AA 5:4), Hegel places the problematic of 'thinking freedom' front and center of his philosophy. Again, this is not a dogmatic postulate but a principle Hegel develops from the very idea of the science that logic ought to be. Logic as a science asks for the unity of object and method (cf. *WL GW* 21.7–8). Without such an identity of object and method, logic would not be a science of thinking. Identifying the object of logic and justifying the method of its investigation cannot be done separately. By identifying the object we are determining the relevant method, and *vice versa* (cf. Houlgate 2006, p. 32). Because the beginning of the Logic cannot be determined by something that is not itself a legitimate part of it, the act of thinking with which the Logic begins is free (cf. Maker 2005).

The way in which object and method can accord with one another consists in analytically developing the perspective of the "free act of thinking...by which it gives itself and produces its object" (*Enc* § 17). As long as thinking and its object are not identical, contradictions arise between the activity of thinking and what it determines through this act. This forces thinking to turn to the very act of thinking rather than to what it posits, which is what Hegel calls "negation." Speculative thinking compares its act of thinking with what it is supposed to be – namely, self-determining.⁵ Contradictions are resolved when thought's activity consists in nothing but thinking self-determination, so that the act of thinking is self-determining – when method and object are truly identical. Presuppositionlessness thus is not only the requirement of Logic's beginning (cf. Houlgate 2006, ch. 3) but also what has to be achieved through the logical development within it. Contradictions are resolved when the Concept is fully self-determining and thus free in its conclusion, the absolute Idea.

I shall now investigate in greater detail the syllogism's key role in Hegel's speculative thought and methodology.

⁴ By discussing the unity of theory and practice in Hegel's Subjective Spirit, Buterin 2009 (p. 27) shows Hegel's indebtedness to the primacy thesis. I discuss this unity within the Logic.

⁵ Thus, contradictions help explain how thinking can be self-determining, and as such be the rational object of the *Science of Logic*.

The Syllogism in Hegel's *Science of Logic*

If Hegel's notion of "the Concept" serves as a substitute for Kant's notion of "reason," it does so with a decisive, critical turn. For Kant, reason was simultaneously defined as the "faculty of inferring [or syllogizing–SHS]" (*Vermögen zu schließen*: *KrV* B386),⁶ and the "faculty of principles" (*Vermögen der Prinzipien*: *KrV* B356). If, according to Hegel, reason as the Concept is the subject of enquiry of the *Logic*, then the identity between object and method is a requirement reason must meet:

Syllogistic inference has long since been ascribed to reason; but, on the other hand, reason in and for itself, and rational principles and laws, are so spoken of that no light is thrown on why the one reason that syllogizes, and the other which is the source of laws and otherwise eternal truths and absolute thoughts, hang together. (*WL GW* 12.90)⁷

As long as one considers these two characteristics as separate, reason is not the freely self-determining Concept. This is so because by being what it is on the one hand, namely syllogizing, it does not determine what it is on the other hand, namely itself as a principle. In order to show their identity, one has to understand how reason is the source of principles by virtue of its the syllogizing activity, i.e., by being self-determining. In other words, one has to show how reason as such can be practical.⁸

Now, if this argument holds, it suggests the need for investigating Hegel's notion of syllogism, which we cannot simply take for granted from the tradition. If we did, we would presuppose something without fully understanding Hegel's use and discussion of the syllogism in the *Doctrine of the Concept*, where the Concept becomes its own subject matter (cf. *WL GW* 12.11). However, there is another oddity in Hegel's treatment of the syllogism. Hegel develops the notion of syllogism out of his notion of judgement, yet the *four* classes of judgements⁹ are not aligned with four classes of syllogisms, but with *three* only. I shall argue that the answer to this seeming unconformity cannot be found solely in the subject-

⁶ Quotes from the *KrV* are from the Guyer/Wood translation (Works Cited: Kant 1998).

⁷ Except when indicated otherwise, quotes from the *WL* are from the Di Giovanni translation (Works Cited: Hegel 2010)

⁸ Note that Kant only stresses the reverse order: he shows how reason as such can be practical by being the source of principles like *our* moral law.

⁹ Hegel inherits these (qualitative and quantitative judgement; judgement of necessity; judgement of the Concept) from Kant, slightly changing their order due to his developmental approach.

tivity chapter, because comprehending the role Hegel assigns to the syllogism is too closely linked to the overall project of the *Logic*.¹⁰ I therefore suggest that there is a fourth syllogism, the “syllogism of the Concept,”¹¹ and that the syllogism as such, the self-determination of the Concept or the question of reason’s being practical, as well as the method of the *Logic*, are inseparable problems.¹²

Judgement, Copula, and Syllogism

In order to develop Hegel’s notion of syllogism as described above I shall briefly start with judgements, the parts of a syllogism.

Judgements are distinct from mere propositions (*Sätze*) because propositions lack the copula (cf. *WL GW* 12.55–6). While “Caesar crossed the Rubicon” is a proposition and can be correct or incorrect, “human beings are mammals” is a judgement that can be true or false. Only the latter is mediated by the copula, connecting the subject with a universal. A developed notion of judgement has to show how the Concept in its three moments (universality, particularity, and singularity) can be self-determining, or be its own cause, as a judgement. This is the case for apodeictic judgements like “This house – so and so constituted – is good” (*WL GW* 12.87), because what it says is justified within itself. Here, all three parts of the Concept – subject, predicate and the mediating copula – bear the form of a judgement, which is why an apodeictic judgement is already implicitly a syllogism. Hence, in the syllogism the judgement is its own cause because it is justified by other judgements. If we *only* had judgements as forms of thinking we would not be able to understand judgement as form. Thinking would

10 Here I disagree with Winfield 2012, who argues that syllogisms are necessarily subjective (p. 274; cf. Carlson 2006, p. 119). This is true for syllogisms in the subjectivity chapter only.

11 This is not Hegel’s expression, but an obvious title for the fourth type of judgement. Nuzzo 2005 uses “syllogism of the method” to name the same figure that I discuss here.

12 Cf. *Enc* § 181R: “Hence the syllogism is the *essential ground of everything true*; and the *definition of the Absolute* from now on is that it is the syllogism.” The syllogism chapter is not exhaustive of Hegel’s notion of syllogism insofar as Hegel continues to use it and cognates in the whole *Doctrine of the Concept*. This language might easily be overlooked in translations: *Schluss*, *schließen*, *ent-schließen*, *aufschließen*, *beschließen* are all semantically related in German, whereas English has different words for these: “reasoning,” “resolution,” “disclosure,” “inferring,” “concluding,” or even “deciding.”

not render itself intelligible, i.e., it would not be self-determining.¹³ Such is the conclusion of the judgement chapter.

However, although syllogisms justify the judgement that is their conclusion, they cannot justify it by presupposing something that cannot itself be determined by the syllogism. The truth of the premises must not be presupposed in ways inconceivable through the very act of syllogizing. Thus, the three classes of syllogisms in the subjectivity chapter proceed in such a way that the mediating term of the respective syllogistic class bears the same kind of universality as the corresponding judgement class. We shall have a closer look at the first class.

The Syllogism of Determinate Being (Quality) and its Contradiction

The syllogism of determinate being (*Dasein*) is what we would call a theoretical syllogism ("This rose is red, red is a color, this rose is color(ed)"). According to the requirements for a syllogism investigated in the framework of the Concept's free self-determination, we must ask whether this type of syllogism is able by its form alone to determine its own premises. In fact, this is Hegel's guiding question in developing the two other forms within this type of syllogism. Now, the judgement of the first premise ("This rose is red") predicates a single quality of a subject. It thus picks out one quality out of a bundle of potential candidates, such as being also green, odorous, etc. (Cf. Stern 1990, p. 62–3, for Hegel's critique of a "bundle model" of objects). But neither the judgement itself, nor the syllogism of determinate being can by their form justify that "red" was the right choice to make.¹⁴ The syllogism of determinate being thus presupposes limitation to one single quality, which cannot be justified by thinking in form of this type of syllogism. This kind of thinking therefore is not free, but heteronomous.¹⁵

13 A developed notion of judgement is a developed notion of universality (*Enc* §171 A), which is predicated in a judgement of which Hegel distinguishes four classes: (i) abstract universality, (ii) allness, (iii) genus/species universality and (iv) universality of the Concept (*Enc* § 171).

14 The contradiction can be shown by applying the form of the syllogism of determinate being to justifying the first premise "This rose is red" as follows: P1. "This rose is colour(ed)"; P2. "Red is a colour"; thus C. "This rose is red" – which is not a valid inference (cf. *WL GW* 12.103).

15 The second form of the syllogism of quality shows this. It is supposed to prove in its conclusion that the second premise is true. Accordingly: P1. "This rose is colour(ed)"; P2. "This rose is red"; thus C. "Red is a colour" – which is, again, invalid because the conclusion cannot be

Likewise, there is a contradiction within the second premise. The kind of universality of this class of syllogism is the formal universality of sensory qualities. It only acknowledges the distinction between singular and universal. However, the second premise contains a rule (“red is a colour”) that does not operate with singularity and universality but with different kinds of universality – a differentiation not allowed by formal universality. Thus, the formal syllogism cannot account for the truth of the second premise because its form is limited to formal universality, while its second premise exceeds this.

Both contradictions arising from the first and second premise are concerned with the inadequacy of the middle term (“red”). The first contradiction shows the content-inadequacy of the mediating term, the second shows the form-inadequacy of the same term. If therefore thinking proceeded only according to the formal syllogism, it would not be able to determine itself because it would be mediated by something it could not justify through its own form. This contradiction is partly overcome within the next type of universality, “allness”—the universality of reflective or quantitative judgements.

I shall briefly turn to a distinction that has become central to contemporary philosophy of action and bears a resemblance to Hegel’s metaphysical distinction. When G.E.M. Anscombe revived the Aristotelian idea of the practical syllogism, she stipulated that the difference between theoretical and practical syllogism must be a difference in form, not in content.¹⁶ For, if it were a difference in content, we would distinguish as many syllogisms as we distinguish contents, such as a “mince-pie-syllogism” (Anscombe 1963, §33). In this objection we can see at least a parallel to Hegel’s explication of the contradiction of the syllogism of determinate being, namely, that the limitation of the first premise consists of the accidentally chosen quality or content. According to Hegel this is a limitation measured by what a syllogism ought to be. There are no such things as “rose-syllogisms” because if the unity between form and content in the syllogism were accidental, thinking would be rendered heteronomous. We should, however, not assume that we already understand what is practical about the syllogism by investigating the next class, reflexive syllogisms (including inductive and analogous reasoning). Rather, Hegel’s notion of the syllogism as such is yet to be fully understood in the context of this investigation of the Logic’s answer to the question how reason can be practical. I will later return to the limits of this analogy between Anscombe and Hegel.

drawn from the premises in the form provided so far (WL GW 12.100). Adding the quantifier “some” does not help because quantifiers are not available ahead of quantitative judgements. ¹⁶ “The interest of the account is that it describes *an order* which is there *whenever* actions are done with intentions” (Anscombe 1963, § 42 – my emphasis).

So far, I have developed the notion of a syllogism out of its transition from judgement, and the contradiction inherent in the syllogism of determinate being, as two examples of Hegel's understanding of contradiction as a conflict between form of thinking at a particular stage, on the one hand, and what is presupposed for this thinking's self-determination, on the other. As long as this presupposition cannot be accounted for by the same form in which thinking proceeds at any particular stage, thinking is not self-determining.

The Syllogism of External Purposiveness (Teleology)

The three types of syllogism in the subjectivity chapter are all subjective forms of thinking, which means that the kind of determination of which they are capable is only immediately (or without justification) a determination of the Concept's objectivity.¹⁷ We shall now briefly look at one exemplary use of "syllogism" beyond the subjectivity chapter, namely, the syllogism of external purposiveness (teleology), before discussing the syllogism of the Concept.

The syllogism of external purposiveness (cf. *WL GW* 12.159) is a decisive step in Hegel's argument for what it means for the Concept to be self-determining, because a purpose is the "concept in ... [its] concrete existence" (*WL GW* 12.155). An external purpose determines its own existence through means. It is external because the means through which the Concept determines itself as a purpose are distinct from the end, that is, distinct from the Concept itself. Thus, external purposiveness has to develop further in order to become the form by which the Concept thinks itself as self-determining. By understanding this particular transition we shall be able to understand why the fully self-determining Concept consists of three sub-syllogisms (P1: subjective purpose; P2: purpose in its realization; C: realized purpose), as well as their consequences for Hegel's notion of syllogism in general.

The first premise of the syllogism of external purposiveness is *subjective purpose*, expressing a means-end relation such as "In order to farm land, one needs a plough."¹⁸ It is subjective due to two characteristics: (a) The subjective purpose

¹⁷ Here I do agree with Winfield 2012. However, this limitation of the subjective syllogisms does not mean that the syllogism as such is not capable of objective determination at all.

¹⁸ This syllogism is by no means restricted to instrumental action but works equally for natural purposes that do not employ any notion of human beings, such as in Kant's example that a

is still unrealized and (b) it only expresses an “ought,” to conform to which it demands objectivity. But objectivity is not yet formed by this ought (the land is not yet farmed by simply judging this means-end relation). Under the heading “subjective purpose,” therefore, Hegel discusses, first, the means-end relation as expressed in a judgement; second, the dependency of this judgement upon something that is not a judgement but rather a world external to it; and third, he makes this contradiction explicit.¹⁹ I suggest that these three argumentative steps be read as constituting a syllogism, conceived as an argument form that goes beyond the subjective forms of thinking of the subjectivity chapter (cf. *Enc* § 207). Because of the difference between the judgement (P1) and the world presupposed (P2), the subjective purpose cannot account for the Concept in its existence, i.e., for what the purpose is supposed to be. Hence, subjective and realized purpose are only accidentally identical (C).

A similar syllogistic structure can be found in the second premise, the *purpose in its realization*, in which the flaws of the subjective purpose are overcome.²⁰ P2 sublates the opposition between subjectivity and presupposed objectivity by conceiving of objectivity as an already formed means. Objectivity is now not only what ought to be formed according to a judgement, but already consists of “a plough.” This, however, can only be achieved by altering the notion of “means.” A means cannot only be a judgment’s abstract part opposed to objectivity, but is also the object in its *practical use* (*WL GW* 12.162). In this sense “a plough” is an object in use, that is, an object made for the realization of the purpose of farming and thus one that already manifests the purpose in an object, in contrast to the mere notion of a plough (cf. *WL GW* 12.166).

sandy soil is advantageous to the growth of pine trees (cf. *KU* § 63) or Hegel’s example that cork trees are advantageous to the wine production (cf. *Enc* § 205 A).

19 Here I disagree with Stekeler-Weithofer 1992 (ch. 2.3.2 regarding *Enc* § 205–8), who reads the syllogism in teleology as the practical syllogism of instrumental reasoning. I see two problems with this reading. (i) Since the Logic has not yet developed a notion of action we cannot use this notion to explain teleology. In fact, external purposiveness is more general than instrumental reasoning. (ii) The systematic link between Hegel’s Logic and his notion of agency lies beyond a notion of external determination (see e.g. Yeomans 2012, ch. 11). Hence, to develop the notion of the Concept’s self-determination in a syllogism we must include the chapter on the Idea. Otherwise, agents’ self-determination will be merely external, and the resemblance between the Logic’s external purposiveness and spirit’s teleological action will remain a mere isomorphism.

20 An example without reference to actions would be: P1. Pine trees require sandy soil (and other conditions) to grow; P2. Here is sandy soil (so are other conditions); thus C. A particular pine tree grows as the singular realization of the concept in P1.

This second premise of the general syllogism of external purposiveness constitutes its middle (*Mitte*); it is the mediating step between the first premise and the conclusion. And since its characteristic feature consists in the fact that it has a split notion of means (*Mittel*), the contradiction here springs from the fact that the middle is not what it is supposed to be, namely, the mediating step. Although we now have a notion of objectivity as already partly realized purpose, we still do not know how the means itself has been realized in such a way as to be posited by the purpose. We lack comprehension of the universal unity of both: “means” as in the subjective purpose (the notion of a plough) and “means” as the realized purpose (the object in its use). For all that this kind of syllogism could establish is their unity in a singular realization (my using a plough purposefully here and now). This, again, is a syllogism whose structure concludes by registering a contradiction between the two means, measured against that which the middle is supposed to be.

Within the conclusion of the general syllogism of external purposiveness – the *realized purpose* – the above-mentioned argument steps become explicit. The realized purpose thus reveals itself retrospectively to be the syllogistic structure of the developed arguments. Accordingly, we develop increasingly better ways to understand the activity of the Concept as “purpose.” We can then say that the syllogism of external purposiveness consists of three syllogisms. In this same way, we shall be able to reconstruct the syllogism of the Concept.²¹

The Syllogism of the Concept

I now turn to what I have named the Syllogism of the Concept, found in the Logic's section on the Idea of the Good as part of Cognition. I suggest reading “good” here as a notion of the Concept as it ought to be, namely, self-determining. Accordingly, the Syllogism of the Concept is a syllogism as it ought to be (cf. *WL GW* 12.199). Like external purposiveness, it consists of three linked sub-syllogisms. I argue that this structure expresses the way of thinking by which we develop an appropriate conception of what the Concept ought to be. The three sub-syllogisms are named “syllogism of immediate realization” (P1), “of action” (P2), and “of the good” (C). I shall discuss these sequentially.

²¹ Internal purposiveness, instead, develops a notion of self-mediation, where the middle is what it is supposed to be, because it strives to be identical with the purpose. Such is for Hegel the “idea of life,” whose reality consists in the infinite process of species, which, despite its infinity, depends on mortal, finite individuals for its realization (*Enc* § 221 A).

Hegel describes the first sub-syllogism as “the good [that] remains an *ought*” (WL GW 12.232–3). Regarding it, he states: “there are still two domains in opposition, ... subjectivity and...objectivity” (WL GW 12.233), an opposition indicative of theoretical reasoning. Hegel equates this first syllogism with external purposiveness, except for the fact that the content is now “absolutely valid” (WL GW 12.232), i.e., that the syllogism’s validity is guaranteed by none other than the syllogizing activity of the Concept. But despite its absolute validity, the first premise remains finite, containing necessary but subjective conditions which are opposed to externality and are only conceivable as immediately realized. As for external purposiveness, this means that there can be several realizations of the good (several good realizations of the Concept), all equally valid despite being potentially in conflict with one another (cf. WL GW 12.232). Since these two pairs of contrasts – between subjectivity and externality, and between several realizations – contradict the activity of the Concept as freely self-determining, we have to reconsider the form of the Concept’s activity. This leads to a correction, which positively results in the second sub-syllogism, the syllogism of action (this step contains what Hegel calls “first negation”: WL GW 12.103).

In the syllogism of action, the opposition between subjectivity and objectivity is conceived as an internal opposition. This syllogism does not depend on externality but carries objectivity in its second premise (WL GW 12.233–4). Something similar occurs here as took place in external purposiveness, when the meaning of “means” changed from P1 to P2 – from a mere word within a judgement to a ‘means’ as an object in use. Now, however, we are no longer addressing an external purpose but an absolute one. Thus, the particularisation of the means from “ought” to “object in use” must be understood as internal to the Concept’s free activity. And the notion of action that Hegel uses in this part of his system refers to the self-determining totality in which this transition takes place. Hence, here “action” does not entail any reference to the “intention” (*Absicht*) of an individual, finite agent.²² Instead, it is “action” as the self-particularisation of the Concept. This is precisely what constitutes the metaphysics of the entire Philosophy of Spirit, within which Objective Spirit (or the coextensive *Philosophy of Right*) represents the syllogism of action. We shall turn to Objective

²² Kervégan 2014 reads this difference between technical teleological syllogism and practical syllogism proper as one between a technical and a universal norm in the major premise. The universal norm of the major premise posits a good that ought to determine the world; the second premise defines a course of action in which this *can* be realized, while the actual realization is the conclusion. Thus, although “Concept” is not easily translated as “norm,” Kervégan avoids distinguishing between a norm and a finite *subject* applying this norm, a distinction indeed yet unavailable within the Logic.

Spirit and the dual structure of right as “ought” and “in use” after taking a closer look at the contradictions of the syllogism of action in the Logic.

The first opposition within the syllogism of action has been identified as that between the first premise (subjectivity) and the second premise (objectivity), which parallel the two meanings of “means.” A second kind of opposition is found within the second premise, as Hegel indicates by stating: “it directs...external means against the external actuality” (*WL GW* 12.233–4). I take this second opposition to be a tension between the actualization of means in a singular act and the external actuality still distinct from it. In fact, then, the syllogism of action cannot determine objectivity altogether as a manifestation of subjectivity, but only in one single act.²³ The difference between subjectivity and objectivity within the syllogism of action is not yet fully understood as a difference within the identity of the syllogism of the Concept. A contradiction still springs from the fact that the middle is not what it is supposed to be, namely, a mediation of the Concept's self-determination *in toto*. First, because its meaning is split between abstract means and means in realization, and second, because the realization is only “a *singular*, never *universal*, act” (*WL GW* 12.235; cf. also *WL GW* 12.231).

The conclusion of the Syllogism of the Concept, which is itself a syllogism (the syllogism of the good), thus has to re-establish the syllogistic form as an absolute, i.e., completely self-determining, form (This contains Hegel's “negation of the negation” or second negation; *WL GW* 12.103, 234; cf. Nuzzo 2005, p. 199). Objectivity fully mediates subjectivity only in the syllogism of the good. And it does so because subjectivity and objectivity are distinguished within a unity that understands itself as what it is, i.e., the unity of the self-determining Concept.

Only in the fully developed syllogism of the good does the Concept determine itself as what it essentially is. This syllogism reveals itself thereby as the form of thinking by which thinking thinks its contradiction (between the act of thinking and what is determined by it) and its resolution, as well as the unity of both. We can say that theoretical reason (the Concept in the syllogism of immediate realization) and practical reason (the Concept in the syllogism of action) are united under the primacy of the practical (the free self-determination of the Concept as conclusion or the absolute Idea) (cf. *WL GW* 12.235–6).²⁴ The

²³ This implies that it cannot bring about objectivity at all. For, if the syllogism of action is not the Concept's objectivity but only part of it, and thus does not relate to the subjective purpose as a whole, it is not an objectivity with which the Logic is concerned.

²⁴ This understanding of the syllogism has resulted from proceeding speculatively in our discussion of contradictions, beginning from ‘judgement.’ We can now grasp why what we wished

non-accidental identity of method and object that the Logic requires is achieved in the syllogism of the Concept,²⁵ that is, in the absolute Idea.

The Concept's Syllogism and Our Action

In discussing the limitations of the syllogism of determinate being, I suggested a parallel between Anscombe's considerations on the practical syllogism and Hegel's criticism of the formal syllogism. This parallel, I shall argue, rests on an assumption that is not itself Hegelian. This is however not a reason to abandon the analogy altogether but rather an invitation to carefully understand its limitations.

The non-Hegelian assumption that lies behind the parallel is that our syllogizing (the subject of Anscombe's enquiry) is what Hegel investigates as 'syllogism' in the Logic. It is not a Hegelian assumption because – as shown in my discussion of the overall project of the Logic – the syllogism is the Concept's activity, that is, the activity that is neither mine, nor yours, nor even immediately ours as finite beings. In short: it is the Concept that syllogizes, but it is you and I who act intentionally. The initial analogy ignored this distinction. Taking it into account now pays tribute to the structure of Hegel's system, which carefully distinguishes between logic and spirit, between metaphysics and *Realphilosophie*.

Some philosophers, however, who argue that the decisive step by which Hegel moves beyond Kant lies in the social embeddedness of a perceiving and acting subject, tend to conceive of the Concept immediately as a "We."²⁶ The Concept's activity is thus understood as our communal project of rational sense-making, which includes intentional actions and acts of practical reasoning (see Stekeler-Weithofer 1992; Pippin 2008). I think that Hegel's system allows for a more sophisticated account. The syllogism as the Concept's activity is part of the Logic, the first part of the system. Intentional action and the well-known distinction between action and deed (cf. *RPh* § 113–8) are integral to the third part of the Philosophy of Spirit. If spirit and logic are conflated, the Concept's activity can only be understood as constituted by spirit. Our finite acts of practical rea-

to comprehend, i.e., the free activity of the Concept as speculative sublation of contradictions that issue from presuppositions, is precisely what we have done so far.

²⁵ Cf. Nuzzo 2005, p. 195: "The object of the logic does not exist until the end of the logic is achieved."

²⁶ Redding 2015 e.g. considers the "I" of Kant's "I think" as the key to Hegel's improvement: "The context for the emergence of the finite 'I' is rather the objective but 'spiritual' social realm" (p. 6). Cf. *WL GW* 12.18.

soning would serve as the only gate through which we may understand practical reason in its universal form,²⁷ which would undermine precisely the Concept's freedom. Thus, we must not conflate logic with spirit or consider them as immediately identical. Hegel himself presents the relation between the three parts of his system as a syllogism (cf. *Enc* § 575–7). Although I cannot do full justice here to the syllogistic structure of the system, this at least suggests that the distinction between metaphysics (logic) and *Realphilosophie* (nature and spirit) can only be made if it is anticipated within the metaphysics itself. That is, the distinction can be made if the Concept's activity is understood as both self-differentiating and as the unity of this differentiation. These two arguments are key to establishing not only the difference between the Concept's activity as Idea and *our* acting and thinking, but also their identity. The Logic cannot leave open the further question as to how the Idea is to enter the system and particularize itself in it. Our discussion of the Syllogism of the Concept has uncovered the structure of its self-determining activity.

Objective Spirit, by differentiating intentional action into action and deed, serves as the mediating second premise of spirit: the syllogism of action. In it, subjectivity and objectivity are conceived as an inner opposition. Objectivity is already shaped by “right” as manifestation of freedom and is thus no longer only the abstract “ought” of Subjective Spirit (cf. Herrmann-Sinai 2016). Hence, right already provides the appropriate means for an agent's intentional self-determination in action. But objective spirit does not yet fully conceive of itself as the unity of the Concept of which these distinctions are inner differentiations.²⁸

Within the chapter on morality, intentional action is thus to be understood within the framework of the activity of spirit that is in a double sense caught up in the opposition between subjectivity and objectivity. This is due, first, to the position of the Morality chapter as the middle of Objective Spirit; second, to the position of Objective Spirit as the middle of the Philosophy of Spirit. Intentional action thus bears the feature of a subjective purpose (*Vorsatz*) in its immediate realization, which is in opposition to a universal (*Absicht*) that already forms objectivity. This is the first tension²⁹ identified at the beginning of this en-

27 This is partly true in the sense that, e.g., the book *Science of Logic* can only be read and thought by the kind of beings we are.

28 Neuhouser 2008 considers this dual structure as relevant for the *RPh* section on Ethical Life, to which he assigns what he calls “social freedom.”

29 In this context we can equate purpose/intention with action/deed. However, depending on whether “deed” is understood as bearing the universal juridical determination of the action

quiry. It can be partly overcome within *Sittlichkeit*, in which a subjective purpose is in line with typical actions by persons with particular social status, mediated by what is already objective – family, civil society, a just state. Here, individuals' actions serve the furtherance of the institutions. Subjectivity becomes particular, and so does objectivity as the particularity of a people. Thus, a provisional identity of the difference between subjective purpose and universal intention can be achieved.

Intentional action, however, also bears the feature that a subjective purpose is manifested in objectivity as a singular act only within the particularity of a people, hence not as universal objectivity. This second tension cannot be overcome within objective spirit because the syllogism of action cannot on its own establish the identity of its premises (subjectivity and objectivity).³⁰ Only the syllogism of the good constitutes what spirit ought to be (as in Absolute Spirit).

In the beginning of this enquiry I have stated that a philosophical investigation into the notion of action, if it wishes to preserve the idea that our thoughts are manifest in our actions, must make intelligible the identity of the difference between ourselves as thinkers and ourselves as self-determining agents. Because of this, I have argued, the thinking in which philosophy proceeds must be thought of as self-determining and thus free. As a methodological consequence, intentional action³¹ can be understood as autonomous if our autonomy is systematically linked to the Concept's freedom in determining itself. Examining this syllogism of the Concept by no other means than thought itself and thus as actual practical self-determination is the task of philosophy – a philosophy that Hegel identifies as belonging to Absolute Spirit.

A detailed discussion of our free self-determination as subjective, objective, and absolute goes beyond the aim of this essay. However, we should be able to see that the final resolution of the tension between subjectivity and objectivity that was decisive in Objective Spirit can only be overcome in philosophical thinking, a thinking attuned to the fact that, in the context of a philosophy of spirit, rational human activity is essentially, and not only accidentally, *our* activity. This

(e.g., in patricide) or whether it refers to the action's consequences (see Quante 2004; Brandom 2013), these two pairs do not necessarily match (cf. Alznauer 2013, p. 73).

30 The notion of "right" in *RPh* is caught up in this same tension. It can never be the universal form required by the Concept's self-determination. First, so Hegel in *RPh* § 261, because the abstract *identity* between right and duty is always a *difference* in its realization. Second, because "right," being always the right of a historically contingent people, retains a moment of contingency.

31 "Intentional" here refers to its technical sense in Hegel's Objective Spirit, a use not always congruent with contemporary ones (cf. Herrmann-Sinai 2016).

is indeed a weighty methodological challenge, as it forces a philosophy of action to conceive of itself as part of a philosophy that is absolute (see a similar argument in Dudley's 2004 criticism of Neuhaus). To acknowledge this challenge is to acknowledge Hegel's metaphysics of action.

The alternative reflex of avoiding any metaphysical claims can lead to a conflation of Logic with Objective Spirit. But we must not construct what the Concept's activity is solely from our familiarity with communal practices, or from formal conceptions of practical reasoning that agents might apply when deliberating about what to do. If we were to do the latter, the Concept would serve as some "regulative idea" of spirit in its objective form, i.e., of social practices – a standard that these ought to meet in order to be rational social practices that lend autonomy to individual agents. But since it can never actually be proven that this standard is met, we can never know that *our* acting is the subject matter of a philosophy of action. Nor can we really achieve a deeper understanding of our action by thinking philosophically about it. Yet we cannot depend upon an accidental identity between what we do when we think about action and what we do when we act. For if we did, our thinking would not be free. Instead, it would depend on something not conceivable by a thinking that understands itself as free. Thus, thinking would depend on something given to it from another source (from us or our practices – whoever this "us" might be), which subsequently would render thinking unintelligible and leave it as heteronomous. Such philosophical thinking would lie outside Hegel's system, and reason would be blind to its own activity – which is precisely the point where Hegel left Kant behind.³²

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³² I wish to thank Sean Bray, David Merrill and Lucia Ziglioli for commenting on various versions of this paper.

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Andrew Davis

On the Limits of Language in a Hegelian Metaphysics

Introduction: Hegel's System: Metaphysics or Epistemology?

In the last thirty years, non-metaphysical readings of Hegel have gained popularity and prominence. While it was once taken for granted that Hegel's project was "metaphysical" in scope, this is no longer the case. To say that Hegel's project is non-metaphysical is to say that it is transcendental in scope, not ontological, and concerns conditions for the intelligibility of beings, not claims about being as such. These readings place Hegel's system of science close to Kant's critical project.

What, then, is Hegel's assessment of Kant's critique of dogmatic metaphysics? Hegel, following Kant, points to the limitations of the pre-Kantian (esp. Wolfian) metaphysical tradition, but he notes that "Plato is not a metaphysician of this sort, and Aristotle still less so, although people usually believe the contrary" (*Enc* § 36 A).¹ This suggests that Hegel's contemporaries often take ancient metaphysics to be dogmatic, while Hegel does not. There are, for Hegel, metaphysical inquiries that are not implicated in Kant's critique and Aristotle's *prote philosophia* is chief among them. If Hegel mostly avoids the word "metaphysics" to describe his system, it may be because the word's meaning had become confused. We should recall, however, that the *Encyclopedia* closes with a substantial quotation from Aristotle's *Metaphysics* book Lambda.

With or without metaphysics, it is difficult to produce a consistent reading of Hegel's work. Reading Hegel's system as subjective idealism is not possible in light of his criticisms of Kant and Fichte. Reading his system as objective idealism is precluded by his criticisms of Spinoza and Schelling. The range of Hegel's criticism indicates that the human mind, material substrate, and the natural world cannot be considered absolute. It is tempting, then, to suggest that human society or culture taken collectively is absolute for Hegel. This would involve reading Hegel as an intersubjective idealist, as the missing link between Kant and 20th century theories of intersubjectivity and philosophy of language. On this model, Hegel's work provides the attention to history, cultural context

¹ Except if otherwise noted, all translations of Hegel are my own.

and the discursive formation of praxis that takes Kant's transcendental revolution toward social and political relevance. Non-metaphysical arguments often rely on attributing some form of discursive intersubjectivity to Hegel, explicitly or implicitly giving language a more central role than is marked off in Hegel's own text.

The emphasis on community as a ground for selfhood in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* has inspired many readers to consider Hegel primarily as a social theorist. If an account of human community is the highest aim (or the highest aim we are willing to accept) of Hegel's system, then once again language will be privileged since language seems to be the objective *substance* of those social relations for Hegel. As a result, even the *Science of Logic* has been read as a discourse theory, as an exploration of a human community's basic norms of intelligibility.² This does not sit easily with some of Hegel's words, such as the claim that the Logic describes God's essence before creation (*WL GW* 21.34/*TWA* 5:44), but contemporary readers have become accustomed to the notion that Hegel sometimes "waxes platonic" (Pippin 1989, p. 242).

When we consider the ontological dimensions of Hegel's philosophical project, it is necessary that we consider Hegel's views on language. In many respects, the "linguistic turn" was a development of the epistemological turn inaugurated by Locke and carried forward so persuasively by Kant. In place of any sort of ontological inquiry, linguistic philosophers placed semantic, pragmatic, syntactic and discursive inquiries aimed at discovering epistemological conditions. This trend in the Anglo-American and Continental philosophical scenes made inroads into Hegel studies as well. J. McCumber, for instance, argues that Hegel's is a "linguistic idealism" (McCumber 2014, p. 106–10). J. Reid claims that "the Hegelian idea of science supposes a discourse that is not only objectively true but is also, itself, true objectivity" (Reid 2007, p. 5). G. Di Giovanni asserts that "the Logic itself is a discourse about discourse" (Di Giovanni 2010, p. xxxv).

But is Hegel's logic about language? Hegel is explicit that logic is the study of thought, thinking about thinking: "Logic is the science of the pure idea, that is, the idea in the abstract element of thinking" (*Enc* § 19). If thinking and discourse are co-extensive, then Di Giovanni must be correct and, moreover, many important conclusions drawn by the non-metaphysical readers are also likely to be correct. After all, if logic concerns intelligibility but not being, it sets us up to expect the same from the philosophies of nature and *Geist*. Di Giovanni is so convinced

² George di Giovanni puts forward this position when he understands what Hegel calls dialectic as "discourse" and suggests that the domain of logic and the domain of language coincide in his introduction to his translation of the *Science of Logic* (Di Giovanni 2010, p. xxxix).

that thinking and language are co-extensive for Hegel that he occasionally translates “denkende” as “discursive” (Di Giovanni 2010, p. 55). We have good reason, however, to doubt that thinking and language are co-extensive for Hegel.³ As a result, the identification of logic with “discourse” and “norms of intelligibility” proves misleading.

I suggest that a fruitful avenue forward in the debate over Hegel’s metaphysics is a re-appraisal of Hegel’s views on language and what they indicate for his ontological commitments. I argue that Hegel finds language to be a necessary but not a sufficient condition for thinking. Hegel notices that language is best used when taken up as inherently “empty” and “mechanical” and then saturated with reason’s speculative ontological insight into wholes. When we grasp Hegel’s account of language as *mechanical* (a view that appears so strange and naive from a post-linguistic turn perspective) the account will reveal itself as a meaningful part of a rarely discussed sort of ontology: the ontology of activity.

Empty Rules: Language in the *Science of Logic*

Admittedly, some of what Hegel writes can seem to indicate that language furnishes us with the thoughts that we think. Hegel writes in the second preface to the *Science of Logic* that the “forms of thought” [*Denkformen*] are “initially” [*zunächst*] set out and set down in language (WL GW 21:10/TWA 5:20). This might seem like an identification of thinking and language. Yet the “initially” should alert us to the fact that the forms of thought are not ultimately determined by language. The question of how language and system relate for Hegel has led to significant debate. There seems to be a conflict between the form (language) and the content (thinking).⁴ A system must be expressed in a contingent, historical language and yet must be necessary and true. Much of this debate is resolved if we can clarify how thinking is both always in language and yet independent of it. Thinking must be able to find itself in and yet remain free from the contingencies of the medium of expression. Thinking “initially” finds its forms in language and then refines those forms by liberating them from the contingencies of their linguistic form in something like the way the universal dog emerges from

3 Forster 2011 (p. 146–68) also concludes that language and thinking are not co-extensive for Hegel, though Forster (having taken the “linguistic turn”) finds this to be a weakness rather than a strength.

4 The “problem of expression” in the Hegel literature (from Mure 1940 to Clark 1960, Simon 1966 and Bodammer 1969) is summarized in McCumber 1993, p. 215–20.

hund, *chien*, etc. A person that has only one word for a thought is not free to think the thought apart from that single contingent form.

Hegel notes in the introduction to the *Science of Logic* that a person who knows several languages “can recognize the expression of *Geist* as such, logic, all through grammar” (WL GW 21:41/TWA 5:53). On a casual reading, Hegel might seem to be arguing that the rules of language (grammar) form the method of thinking (logic). However, a close reading shows that Hegel is actually saying that grammar is informed by *Geist*, not the other way around. Hegel argues by the end of the above quoted sentence that we must grasp self-relating *Geist* as it moves in our grammar to turn dry, lifeless rules into practices of “living worth.” Language does not provide the context for grasping philosophy; it is the other way around.

These may seem pedantic points, but the whole question of whether Hegel’s system is non-metaphysical will hang on these and other similarly subtle distinctions in Hegel’s writings. If language gives the content to logic then the conditions of language would be the conditions of thinking. The study of thinking would be a study of discourse. Deeper understanding of languages and their rules would yield logical insights, which would in turn yield ethical, political and philosophical insights. Hegel’s Logic would then proceed by studying grammar and the “linguistic turn” would be the proper next move. But, of course, Hegel’s Logic does not proceed by studying grammar. Hegel does insist that grammar study is an ideal first step toward studying logic and philosophy and so should be at the heart of education for young people (TWA 4:322). Hegel, then, does not disregard language study, but he does not consider it part of philosophy proper. From this perspective, considering philosophical questions as questions of language indicates a failure to advance past abstract category study (grammar) to the study of concrete concepts themselves (logic) as embodied in nature and *Geist*.

Throughout the Logic, Hegel’s focus is on thinking. When, on occasion, he turns to language, it is to provide *examples* that illustrate thinking. The best example of ordinary language that reflects thinking is what Hegel calls the speculative word. The “*speculativer Geist der Sprache*” is evident when a single word has opposite meanings (WL GW 21:11/TWA 5:20). The German language, Hegel notes, is particularly rich in such words. “*Aufheben*” is a speculative word, meaning both “to cancel” and “to preserve” (WL GW 21:94/TWA 5:114; cf. *Enc* § 96ZA). Thinking takes pleasure in recognizing speculative movement in language, because it is a kind of self-recognition. When we consider speculative words, we see structures that mirror the soul’s inner tension and movement. Hegel does not argue that we learn to grasp the speculative *from* language, but rather that thinking, in touch with speculative reason in and through itself, recognizes

this *in* language. Readers that privilege the understanding (as opposed to reason) as the highest mode of knowing will take no delight in a word like *aufheben*. In fact, such words are bothersome to analysis: such readers will be forced to pick which of the word's contradictory meanings is to apply in each case.

It is only thinking transformed by rational insight that recognizes itself in the speculative word. This insight does not come from a study of language as such (though once gained one can see it displayed in language); a closer look at the *Encyclopedia's* philosophy of *Geist* will indicate why this is.

The Empty Sign: Naming Nature in the *Encyclopedia*

Hegel's most substantial remarks about language are in the memory (*Gedächtnis*) section of the philosophy of *Geist* volume of the *Encyclopedia*. This placement is telling. The fullest consideration of language belongs neither to anthropology nor to phenomenology, but to psychology, to Hegel's account of *Geist's* "universal modes of activity" (*Enc* §440). Within psychology, the study of language belongs to theoretical rather than practical *Geist*. This means that such study is subordinated to the study of *Geist's* theoretical activities (*anschauen*, *vorstellen*, *denken*). Moreover, a consideration of language belongs most of all to the middle stage: *Vorstellung*, representative imagination. This places the study of language as part of the bridge from intuition to thinking proper.⁵ Systematic placement alone indicates what I am arguing: language is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for thinking.

We learn in the *Encyclopedia's* Philosophy of Nature that nature is manifold (*vielfach*) but thinking requires that it be simple and one (*einfach*). Thinking brings this about through naming (cf. *Enc* Introduction to the Philosophy of Nature, *TWA* 9:12). Thus, our most straightforward answer to a question about a natural being's being is a name. Q: What is this? A: a lion, an oak, etc. Naming is *Geist's* way of elevating nature to itself. The universal essence of natural beings (as opposed to their sensuous appearance as constantly changing particulars) enters consciousness through names which are each evidence of a unifying capacity present in *Geist*. Names alone do not compel understanding, but are an outward sign of an inner process.

⁵ For an alternative account of this transition, see Clark 1960, p. 564–9.

Hegel traces a path from object to image, image to symbol, symbol to sign and sign to name (cf. *Enc* § 457 A).⁶ The symbol is the highest form of the image because it points toward a content that is beyond the mere repetition of sensuous qualities in the imagination (e.g. Zeus is represented by an eagle because the eagle symbolizes strength by having this quality). The sign, e.g. a gravestone, no longer has any meaningful relation to the sensuous material. Nothing about a rounded stone symbolizes the departed person. The stone is thus not a symbolic representation but rather a sign. The sensuous material has been wholly negated; it points beyond itself. A name is the highest kind of sign. A name is the most complete negation of the sensuous realm that can present itself to sensation. Completely different sounds or markings can thus signify the same content (dog = *Hund* = *chien*). Names are arbitrary and need to be treated as arbitrary to work properly as signs.

The meaning of the name has no relation to its sensible qualities of tone or letter and thus is almost liberated from the indifferent manifold variety of nature. Names may wander about in their designations, but this movement is minimal when compared to the ceaseless alteration of sensible qualities. Yet if the name does not capture the sensuous qualities of the object, what is its content? The content of a name, as with the contents of memory in general, is an act of *Geist*. We may think a memory is “of” something other than our thinking (e.g. an event), something outside our thinking, but Hegel reminds us that we ourselves are the objects of our own memories:

In memory the subject in itself makes itself into the *Sache*, into an object of itself. Thus the subject in itself is objective, the *Sache*. This is the transition to thinking. Memory and thinking are already related in language. The principle of thinking is what brings forth memory, and this has to become rational. (*VGeist* V 13:186/Hegel 2007, p. 205–6)

Note particularly the final clause here. Theoretical intelligence as memory is the principle of thinking but must first become rational to become thinking proper. The core of my argument in what follows is that this process occurs through language, not because of it.

Our memories are not direct correspondences to an indifferent, external state of affairs, but *subjective acts*. Moreover, a memory is a subjective act wherein the subject becomes an object for itself. This is not a loss of the original truth of the represented object (as in Hume’s account of impressions and ideas) but rather a

⁶ Because symbols are still a kind of image and names are a kind of sign, Hegel sometimes expresses this movement in a shorter form: object to image to name (*VGeist* 13:215/Hegel 2007, p. 230).

gain. Because it is brought into connection with other representations, the memory becomes more than an indifferent object sitting meaninglessly alongside other objects. The memory is involved in the movement of thinking. We can remember images, tastes, touches, sounds or smells, but the highest act of memory is remembering a name. The name lets go of everything that is unessential (for thinking) in the particular thing, like a colander that lets out water but keeps within what we want to eat.

Because immediate sense objects are meaningless, memory plays a significant role by offering a meaningful object. In the name, the highest object of the power of memory, we not only express ourselves but also grasp ourselves as so expressed. This means that language, properly understood, is the objective side of intelligence. Language is how thinking presents itself to itself. This makes names the proper objects of thinking (not bodies and not images). For this reason language is necessary for thinking:

Names are conditions of thinking itself: for thinking is consciousness, and so must have something objective within itself. The content, which we have in the name, is what we call the sense [*Sinn*] (therefore we do not need the image) of which we are conscious, and which we have wholly before us. (*VGeist V* 13:219/Hegel 2007, p.233)

Nature's infinite variety and "unbridled contingency" refuses to be comprehended (*Enc* § 248). Nature becomes true only in memory, when it is *erinnert*, recollected and inwardized (*Enc* §251 A). That is, when it is named: "... every word affords a more excellent ground for the knowledge of God's being than any single object of nature" (*Enc* § 248). Hegel even suggests that trying to think without words may lead to madness (*VGeist V* 13:218/Hegel 2007, p. 232). There is no transition from contingent, natural existence to the rich life of *Geist* without names. At the same time, however, we will see that language is not sufficient for thinking. Language, understood as the body of thinking, needs a soul.

Names are the first object forged wholly by the intelligence and so the first object that is also thoroughly subjective or inward. To be free and self-determining, *Geist* must find itself in a medium that is already transformed by it. Yet in order to think we need more than the medium, more than words. We must come to know the form, the soul that animates all the different relations of words. It is worth noting here that Hegel argues that it is not God or Adam but Reason that invents language to serve for its expression: "it is rationality [*Vernünftigkeit*], intelligence, because it is rational, that invents language, because as representative imagination [*Vorstellung*] it must give itself existence [*Da-sein*]" (*Enc* § 459 A). It should not surprise us, then, that it will be reason that completes language. I aim to show in the following sections that reason compen-

sates for the emptiness of names and the one-sidedness of propositions, not through further language or reflection on language but through rational, speculative or ontological insight. Reason is the alpha and the omega of language.

The Empty Name: Mechanical Memory and the Need for Reason

Language liberates us from the immediacy of sensation but still binds us to the imagination, to memory. This indicates a limitation. In language, *Geist* is still outside itself (even though it is in a medium of its own making) because it still grasps itself as an object (*Enc* § 462–3). To minimize the intrusion of externality on our acts of self-expression, we must grasp language as a mere means, a mere vehicle, that is, as a mechanism.⁷ Hegel discusses three kinds of memory: retentive, reproductive and mechanical. At its highest, memory is merely mechanical (*Enc* § 457; see also *VGeist* V 13:219–220/Hegel 2007, p. 233).⁸ Language learning is at its best when learned by rote. Understandably, many readers find this strange. Yet Hegel’s argument here is consistent with how he deals with materiality and nature throughout the *Encyclopedia*. Rote learning distances us from the sensuous quality of language and helps us recognize the difference between *Geist* and its mode of expression, just as it must recognize itself as distinct from nature. Names learned by rote are empty. Empty names can be filled by thinking, while names already closely tied to certain images, contexts or relations are in danger of treating contingencies of association as necessities for thinking. Hegel champions alphabetic writing over “heiroglyphic” writing for this reason (*Enc* § 459 A). That empty names learned by rote are the best names for Hegel indicates at a glance that language and thinking are not co-extensive.

The relations within memory are extrinsic, not intrinsic. “Memory is just this universal abstract power that holds everything together” (*VGeist* V 13:223/Hegel 2007, p. 235). Memory is the abstract unity of intelligence (it holds its contents together indifferently) while thinking is the concrete, living or active unity of intelligence (it interrelates its contents dialectically: see Clark 1960, p. 562–3). The relations present in a natural language are extrinsic and become intrinsic, as we

⁷ In the 1809 *Schuljahrsabschlussrede*, Hegel notes that the “mechanical” study of language and grammar is necessary in education as a way of distancing ourselves from ourselves, for it confronts *Geist* with what is “alien” (*TWA* 4:322).

⁸ For a different but complementary approach to mechanical memory, see Thompson 2006, esp. p. 41–8.

will see, only through the active involvement of reason's ontological insight into wholes. Names have no abiding inner connection to each other in language itself; we have to forge connections continually in living acts of communication.

For Hegel, language is not so much "deep structure" or "discursive field" as it is the objective side of an expressive act of a being that thinks. This partly explains why Hegel considers spoken language "primary" (*Enc* § 459 A). Speaking is more proximately connected with the desire for (and the embodied act of) communication itself. This is also why Hegel privileges the simpler signs, tones, alphabets and grammars over the more complex, arguing that as a people develop, their language simplifies: "it appears that the language of the most developed [*gebildetsten*] people has the most undeveloped grammar" (*Enc* § 459). If language were *Geist's* native element, the soul of its thinking, we would welcome grammatical complexity as a direct mirror of complexity of thought. But since language is merely a means to give determinate existence to thinking which remains free in itself, a simpler medium is better and more expedient. The more the medium draws attention to itself, the less it functions as a medium.

We could choose to do many things: kick, scream, run, but instead we speak. Today, language is often addressed in more abstract terms and not considered, first and foremost, as the act of a subject. Wittgenstein uncovers language games, the fields of usage which seem to determine our meanings for us largely independent of our thinking. Chomsky hypothesizes "deep structures" or biologically encoded fundamental relations that also seem to determine our capacity for understanding apart from our own conscious activity as communicators. Foucault invokes "discourse" as a field which, again, determines our meanings for us in relation to the flow of power. Hegel, by contrast, emphasizes not the spectral general will of that pseudo-agent "discourse," but focuses on the living communicator, the self-aware I. Name and meaning are not inwardly connected in language, discourse, use, or deep structure, but only in and through the act of thinking. Without an act of thinking, all connections between words and meanings are mechanical, extrinsic, inherited but not yet owned.

Hegel's emphasis on language as mechanism is not an indication that he takes thinking to be mechanical. Hegel recognizes what so much work on language in the 20th century reveals: languages can pre-determine and close off the possibilities of thinking. Yet Hegel highlights our power to nullify such pre-determination by recognizing language learning as a mechanical process, by recognizing names as empty. Hegel notes in the preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* that for the ancients, education had to transform the sensuous world into something thinkable. They had to *name* the world in order to think being. We moderns inherit countless fixed determinations of thought through mindless repetitions of language and our education consists in sublating, making fluid

and re-animating these thoughts (*PhG TWA* 3:37). In order to do this, we must recognize the nullity of the fixed determinations, we must recognize language as a mere mechanism. Where thinkers of the linguistic turn were content to trim human possibility to fit existing social forms on display in our languages, Hegel aims to preserve the fundamental freedom of thinking. In this, Hegel follows Plato's Socrates in the *Cratylus* (cf. 440c-d) who suggests that we should not trust names (*onomata*) as reliable and true but should seek forms (*eide*). Hegel would also affirm, with the fool in *Twelfth Night*, "To see this age! A sentence is but a cheveril glove to a good wit. How quickly the wrong side may be turned outward!" (Act 3, Scene 1). Hegel's discussions of language are best understood in the context of a long and venerable tradition of lexical skepticism. We should treat names dialectically, using them and negating them at once.

The key passage for the present argument that language is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for thinking comes at the end of *Enc* §464:

Memory as such is itself the merely external mode [*Weise*], the one-sided moment of the existence [*Existenz*] of thinking; the transition is, for us or in itself, the identity of reason and the mode of existence[.] Because reason now exists in the subject, his activity brings about the identity; this is *thinking*. (*Enc* § 464)

Intelligence has its *Existenz* in memory. Through remembering names, intelligence stands-outside (*ex-sistere*) itself within itself. Thinking thus finds itself stranded in a one-sided, merely external mode: language. Yet if this external mode, language, is fused with reason, it no longer alienates thinking. Most readers seem to miss the reappearance of reason within the sections on language, but it is vital that we attend to it. The return of reason here indicates the need to find truth in the dynamic unity of subjectivity and objectivity, neither in language's objectivity alone nor in the abstract subjectivity that has not expressed itself and thus held itself as object. When fused with memory, reason no longer remains implicit or potential, but through this mode it can come to exist in the living subject. Notice that Hegel stresses that it is the subject's own activity that brings about the identity of memory and reason, not some feature of language or discourse. Instead of just remembering words, the subject reasons-and-remembers. That is, she thinks.

Grasping Wholes: Reason and Ontology in the *Encyclopedia*

Recall that it is in the section on memory that Hegel discusses language, signs, names and meanings. This position alone might bother the contemporary reader. Surely, mere memory is a low place to consider the awesome power of language. Yet I think Hegel is justified in this placement. He simultaneously invites us to consider just how potent and valuable memory is as a capacity and also warns against over-estimating the power of language to govern thinking and truth. Without memory, we could not become objects for ourselves. We would lack proper self-awareness. Yet without reason, we could never overcome the contingency and partiality present within our memories and languages.

Reason is the culmination of the second part of Subjective *Geist*, phenomenology, just as thinking is the culmination of the third part, psychology. In the phenomenology sections, outward looking consciousness develops to become inward looking self-consciousness, which ultimately develops to become reason, the power that unites these two seemingly opposed movements (*Enc* § 437 A).

Reason is what we call our own activity when self-consciousness grasps that “its determinations are just as much objective, just as much determinations of the being of things, as they are its own thoughts.” Many readers take this sort of talk to indicate that Hegel subordinates objectivity to subjectivity and ultimately views human thought, usually taken as a collective, intersubjective structure, as constructing objectivity or reality through “categories” or “norms.” I do not share this view. First of all, such a view does not solve the problem with the proposition highlighted in Hegel’s preface to the *Phenomenology*, since it makes the act of the subject the source of meaning and truth (*PhG TWA* 3:26–7/Hegel 1977, p. 12–13). But if the truth is to belong not just to the knower but to the known, this cannot be our method. When Hegel critiques the proposition, he is critiquing subjective idealism. By contrast, objectivity and subjectivity are co-determined by the universality that includes them both but belongs to neither. Reason is “the universality” that is both “the *object* that saturates and engages [*befassen*] the I” and “the pure I, the pure form that over-grasps and in itself engages [*befassen*] the object” (*Enc* § 438).

Subjectivity has not won a victory over objectivity here – *both* have collapsed as independent projects. Epistemology in a Lockean or Kantian sense has thus collapsed, since it depends on finding an independent subjective ground that conditions objects. Reason, then, is aligned with the practice of ontology in a renewed sense, with the realization that objects and subjects are mutually conditioning and share a common rhythm of development, a common *method*. Reason

moves together with all movements, all actualities, cultural, natural and logical. When we reason we grasp the common method by which all that is is what it is.

It is vital that we see reason not as the static unity of subject and object, but as the dynamic collapse of each into the other. The words “subject” and “object” “signify [*bedeuten*] what they are outside of their unity” and so talking of their simple unity is “inept” (*PhG TWA* 3:41/Hegel 1977, p. 23). Such artificial unity of two fixed terms that have their meaning only outside the proposed unity (and thus negate by definition the very unity in which they are placed) is a constant problem for the expression of speculative thinking in language. Reason thus requires the collapse of the logical regime of “objects” and “subjects.” When this collapse takes place, the understanding becomes reason. Abstract identities develop differences that we articulate in language (this is the work of the understanding), but these differences, if we think about them patiently, become differences that are not differences (this is the work of reason). When differences are both articulated and canceled, organic wholes are formed. Living bodies but also philosophical concepts are examples of such wholes. Such organisms have intricate interior articulations that cannot be truly separated or differentiated from one another or the whole (as with organs in a living body). Reason is the name for the knowing that knows such wholes not just insofar as the knower herself is such a whole (self-consciousness) but insofar as the world is such a whole. Reason is not just the feeling for life (self-consciousness has this) but the knowledge of life in its concrete expressions. Reason is the realization that dawns when plant growth and the formal syllogism are united as different ways of talking about the same activity (cf. *Enc* § 166). Objectivity and subjectivity come together on the groundless ground of the common dialectical rhythm of self-relating activity (of which each are one-sided expressions).⁹

In his discussion of intuition Hegel offers an example that clarifies the role of reason in theoretical intelligence generally. He notes that some people gather up particulars and cannot advance beyond them to a vision of the whole. He connects this to the stage of sensuous consciousness in *Enc* § 418, a stage before reason is developed. By contrast, talented historians are capable of not just sensuous consciousness, but intuition, an apprehension of particular things already combined with the totality grasped by reason. Such a historian has “the whole of the circumstances and events... present before him as living intuition [*in lebendiger Anschauung*]” (*Enc* § 449 A). Reason is insight into the living whole and it

⁹ Describing self-relating activity as a “groundless ground” is a way of expressing Hegel’s claim that logic and thus science as a whole cannot “presuppose” anything, even method (*WL GW* 21:27/*TWA* 5:35; cf. *Enc* 78).

can saturate our apprehension of a single particular, as when we see a bee and recognize its connection to the sexual reproduction of plants. This insight is not cultivated by the study of language, but rather by *seeing through* our static terms and sentences as we use them to the fluid concept itself.

Our language must be transformed by reason's ontological insight so that it can become the medium for thinking proper. Language itself cannot overcome the subject-object dualism through itself, because subject-verb grammar perpetuates the understanding's dualistic view of being. Speculative words bear witness to the way in which any fixed determination is always only a moment in a *movement* of determining. The reader who recognizes the "speculative" aspect of words that both affirm and negate does so because her feeling for language has been saturated by reason. Reason indicates that it is necessary to grasp the movement of determining rather than try to gather up the fixed moments as separate entities. The word *aufheben* refuses to mean just one thing – it is both "to cancel" and "to preserve." This dual meaning is unstable from the point of view of the understanding. It is unstable from the point of view of language in the memory section which uses names as tokens, as reminders. It is unstable for any account of language which relies on language itself for indications of truth. Yet the contradiction is not unstable for thinking, which has been composed out of the expressive objectivity of language and the speculative, rational insight into the unity of subject and object. Such unity is possible, as speculative meanings attest, only if we let go of fixed determinations and heed the determining activity itself (in which the fixed determinations appear as moments). Thinking requires ontological insight into determining activity that can saturate language but is not present in it initially. Once the ontological insight of reason thoroughly transforms one's grasp of language, one is capable of thinking. As a result, thinking proper is not a merely subjective activity (as memory is), but rather: "*Das Denken ist das Sein*" (*Enc* § 465 A).

Names allow human consciousness to progress beyond the sensuous. Yet they take us to a place beyond the sensuous that proves empty. It is reason that supplies content here through speculative, ontological insight into living, moving self-relations. The truth of thinking is not derived from words, though it depends on them for expression, i.e. for existence. Realizing this, we do not stop using language, but we use it more fluidly. We do not expect truth to result from an analysis of sentences but rather from grasping the movement of *Geist* that is expressing itself. The names do not ground or invent the dialectic that governs the relations that hold among all that is named. If language is the body of thinking, reason is its soul.

Moving Wholes: Thinking and *Geist* in the *Encyclopedia*

Thinking makes constant, prolific use of language and yet cannot be reduced to it or fully gleaned from a study of it. Most authors that write on Hegel and language turn to language to foreground its importance. I turn to language to highlight its poverty, its emptiness, its need for reason. Language's need for reason parallels our need, as knowers, for ontological inquiry. We must ask what it is that is when anything is or we will take for granted fixed categories as *de facto* limits of human thinking.

Language, like nature, presents us with a false diversity where there is a single self-relating concept. Speculative reason holds us to the unifying insight (even in the face of contradiction) that overcomes this false show of diversity. As we have seen, Hegel views thinking, in its governing sense, as the union of the inner life of intelligence as reason, and the external mode of intelligence as memory and language (*Enc* § 464). It is through language, through naming and recalling names, that thinking can patiently articulate and unpack reason's holistic insight. Thinking is reason-at-work not so much in as *through* language.

It is significant that what advances the intelligence beyond the endless play of mechanical representations (names) is not greater social awareness (as in most 20th century studies of language use) but greater ontological insight. Memory advances to thinking by reason's insight into the whole, the world of restless dialectical activity that cannot be divided into subject and object. Insight into the whole, then, is insight not into a sum or an entity but an activity that constitutes the whole as such. The transition from *Vorstellung* to thinking is crucial, for thinking is the fundamental self-relating activity of *Geist* and thus the centerpiece of Hegel's whole system: "thinking, however, is this one and the same center to which oppositions return as to their truth" (*Enc* § 467).

The absence of a pervasive theory of language in Hegel's system of science is not accidental. The lack indicates a fullness. Reason has insights that cannot be gained from the understanding's study of syntax, usage or discourse. Language does not form an ultimate horizon for philosophy. Hegel's remarks indicate the need to animate language, to bring an extrinsically related, mechanical collection of names into the active movement of reason (*Enc* § 464). Because language and thinking are not co-extensive and because the study of language is not the same as the study of thinking, Hegel's explicit discussions of language do not support reading the logic as a "discourse about discourse" or, what presumably follows, reading *Geist* as an intersubjective community of intelligibility rather than an ontological insight. When we study *Geist*, we do not make lan-

guage into the chief object of our study, even though words will be our necessary means of expression.

Geist is at the heart of Hegel's work and yet proves continually elusive. Even a reading of Hegel's logics must put forward an interpretation of *Geist* because, as Hegel writes in the introduction to the *Science of Logic*: "To focus attention on this *logical* nature which animates [*beseelt*] *Geist*, moves [*treibt*] and works in it, this is the task" (*WL GW* 21:15/*TWA* 5:27). But what is *Geist*? Is it individual or collective? Is it human or more than human? Is it culture or is culture just one of its surface effects? Many readers deny that *Geist* commits us to ontology, arguing that an account of *Geist* involves only a claim about human history, or about human faculties.

We struggle to say precisely what *Geist* is because we expect it to be an entity or an essence of some kind. Yet Hegel is clear that *Geist* is an activity and thus neither individual nor collective, neither human nor cosmic, neither cultural nor material. After all, "running" may be fast or slow but it cannot be red or large. *Geist* is a way of doing things, but cannot be pinned down with determinate qualities or normative boundaries. *Geist* cannot be predicated or understood as the subject of an ordinary proposition. As Hegel says, "*Geist* is activity [*Tätigkeit*] in the sense that the Scholastic says that God is absolute actusity [*Aktuosität*]" (*Enc* § 34 A). On this note, consider one of Hegel's most passionate programmatic statements from the beginning of the *Encyclopedia's* third part:

Geist is not a being-at-rest [*ein Ruhendes*], but much more the absolutely restless, the pure activity, the negating or the ideality of all fixed determinations of the understanding, – not abstractly simple but in its simplicity at the same time a self-from-itself-differentiating. (*Enc* § 378 A)

Language, like understanding, works to preserve rather than to negate determinations and distinctions. *Geist*, however, is "the negating of all fixed determinations," that is, "pure activity." If we are to take Hegel at his word, it is clear that a Hegelian metaphysics will be an ontology not of language but of activity.

Hegel approaches human experience not insofar as it is governed by fixed categories of the understanding but inasmuch as it moves according to self-producing self-negation. Language is crucial to this process not because it sets limits or gives rules or reveals deep structures or defines essences, but because it is empty enough, mechanical enough to allow for preservation, recollection and expression. Language helps us hold on to the past moments of movement and allows us to carry them forward into our thinking of the whole.

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Michael Morris

***The German Ideology* and the Sublation of Idealism**

On the Salutary Persistence of Hegelian Metaphysics

I

In the ongoing debates concerning the relationship between Hegel's philosophy and the development of Marx's thought, we can readily discern two broad camps. On the one hand, many scholars, including L. Althusser, H. Mah, D. Brudney, and J. Rosenthal, have emphasized the fundamental rupture that separates Marx's mature thought from the lingering Hegelian flirtations of his youth. Althusser thus speaks of Marx's "prodigious break with his origins, a heroic struggle against the illusions he had inherited from the Germany in which he was born, and an acute attention to the realities concealed by these illusions" (Althusser 2005, p. 84). On this view, then, Hegel's philosophy represents a distinctly German illusion or form of ideology, a set of abstract and mystified dogmas that merely conceal reality.

The interpretations developed by Althusser, Mah, and Brudney draw heavily upon *The German Ideology*, the posthumously published manuscript first composed in 1845 and 1846. They tend to present the text as the crucial point of rupture, the moment when Marx definitively repudiated philosophy in every manifestation, whether Hegelian, Young Hegelian, or otherwise. The polemical language of *The German Ideology* provides ample support for this interpretation. Specifically, the text appears to endorse a highly positivistic and Baconian vision of empiricism. It seems to reject philosophy as nothing but obfuscating, mystified, and distracting prejudice. Indeed, the language of naïve empiricism provides an apparent mantra for *The German Ideology*. Thus, in opposition to German philosophy, Marx now insists that his approach begins with claims that can "be verified in a strictly empirical manner" (MEW 3:20).¹ Rejecting all "dogmas," such as Hegelian philosophy, he now insists that thought must begin only with "real presuppositions," that is, "real individuals, their actions, and their material life-conditions" (MEW 3:20). "In every case," he further insists, "empirical observation must demonstrate, in an empirical manner, without any mysti-

¹ All Marx translations are my own.

fication or speculation, the relationship between the structures of social and political life” (*MEW* 3:25). With this endless repetition of “real” and “empirical,” Marx’s intentions seem clear: he rejects all Young Hegelian attempts to appropriate the legacy of the master, opting instead for the straightforward and scientific observation of social and political life, particularly as it unfolds across the Rhine, where historical progress has not acquired the form of stultified parody.

While the rhetoric of *The German Ideology* proclaims a fundamental break with the themes of Hegelian philosophy, there are numerous passages from Marx and Engels’ collective corpus that suggest a different kind of relationship. Thus, in the years after Marx’s death, Engels penned a retrospective monograph on the subject, a work entitled *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*. In this work, Engels proudly proclaims that “the German worker’s movement” represents the sole “heir of classical German philosophy,” the lone repository of the riches of “German theoretical sensibility” (*MEW* 21:307). More specifically, he presents dialectical materialism as a doctrine derived from an extended and critical engagement with Hegel’s philosophy, an engagement that he characterizes as a process of “sublation” or “*Aufhebung*.” “Such a mighty accomplishment,” Engels says, speaking of Hegel’s philosophy, cannot be transcended or overcome through a simple act of rejection: “it must, in its own sense, be sublated” (*MEW* 21:273). In other words, despite whatever distortions or confusions may beset Hegel’s philosophy, it cannot simply be dismissed or ignored. Instead, it must be criticized, transformed, and retained.

Engels’ reflections find confirmation in various remarks scattered across the trajectory of Marx’s career. In 1844, for instance, in the “Introduction” to his critical notes on Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*, Marx decries “the practical political party,” those who seek to “negate” theoretical speculation by simply “turning their back on philosophy and looking elsewhere.” In opposition to this purely practical and anti-theoretical stance, Marx insists that German philosophy can only be negated through a process that involves both “sublation” and “realization” (*MEW* 1:384). Broadly similar remarks can also be found long after Marx’s purported break with Hegel. In *Capital*, for instance, Marx famously presents his own dialectical method as the “direct opposite” of Hegel’s dialectic. He then goes on to characterize this relationship in admittedly metaphorical and unfortunately mechanistic terms, in terms that may or may not be taken to designate some form of sublation. Hegelian dialectic must simply be inverted or set on its feet, he insists, and then we shall discover the “rational kernel” hidden in its “mystical shell” (*MEW* 23: 27).

Setting out from these highly programmatic statements, many scholars have attempted to identify the economically instantiated and/or sublated persistence of specific Hegelian categories and transitions in Marx’s mature work, often fo-

cusing on potential parallels between Marx's later works, such as *Capital* and the *Grundrisse*, and Hegel's *Science of Logic* (cf. Arthur 1993; Meaney 2002; Shamsavari 1991; Smetona 2012; Smith 1990; Uchida 1988). In another sub-variation on this trend, some scholars, including G. Lukács, S. Hooke, and A. Wood, have emphasized Marx's continued reliance upon more general and broadly ontological themes from Hegel's philosophy. Two central claims characterize this interpretation. First, these scholars maintain that, following Hegel, Marx also conceives reality – that is, the natural world insofar as it has come under the sway of social organization or formation – as a holistic, organic, and at least partially self-organizing totality (cf. Hook 1968, p. 62–4; Lukács 1968, p. 171–98; Wood 2004, p. 215–41). Second, these scholars maintain that both Hegel and Marx emphasize the fundamentally processual nature of social reality (Hook 1968, p. 64–72; Lukács 1968, p. 171–98; Wood 2004, p. 215–41). More specifically, they claim that both Hegel and Marx insist upon the ontological priority of a kind of end-oriented process or action over more traditional conceptions of entity or substance.

We thus observe the broad camps that have formed in the debates over the relationship between Hegel and Marx. The first camp focuses on *The German Ideology* and emphasizes the complete rupture in Marx's development, the ultimate discontinuity between Hegelian philosophy and Marxism. By contrast, the second camp tends to construe the development of Marx's mature thought as the critical sublation of Hegel's philosophy, focusing on the specific discussions in *Capital* and/or certain ontological themes that characterize Marx's thought more generally. In this paper, I provide new resources to bolster the second sub-variation within the second camp. Moreover, I argue that these basic ontological theses commit Marx to a complex and hermeneutic conception of knowledge, one that cannot simply begin with the particular data of experience as immediately or unproblematically given. Focusing specifically on *The German Ideology*, which has traditionally served as the textual bastion for those who advocate some absolute rupture in Marx's development, I argue that the apparently Baconian and positivistic pronouncements in this text are highly misleading; that they obscure Marx's novel conception of empiricism; that their apparent meaning is fundamentally at odds with the actual argumentative procedures employed in the text; and that these argumentative procedures demonstrate Marx's persistent commitment to a broadly holistic, self-organizing, and processual conception of reality.

My interpretation of *The German Ideology* builds upon a few elliptical and highly epigrammatic lines from the text, upon occasional sentences that criticize "abstract empiricism." In order to provide the context necessary to illuminate these somewhat cryptic remarks, I first turn, in Part Two, to consider Hegel's dis-

cussion of the nature of mind in §378–381 of the third part of the *Encyclopedia*. These paragraphs provide a textual exemplification and particularly clear articulation of Hegel's conception of mind as holistic, self-organizing, and inherently processual. Then, in Part Three, I use this context to interpret Marx's rejection of abstract empiricism, the view that construes reality as a shifting aggregate of certain basic, stable, and broadly atomistic components. Finally, in Part Four, I show how Marx's insistence upon the holistic, partially self-organizing, and processual structure of social reality guides the argumentative procedures employed in central stretches of *The German Ideology*. As we shall see, these procedures are highly hermeneutic, not positivistic or Baconian.

II

Hegel's ontological prioritization of holistic totality and action may be derived from his prolonged meditation upon an ancient metaphysical problem, the problem of the relation between the one and the many, particularly as it relates to the structure of genuine entities (cf. Bradley 1959, p. 16–20, 501–11; Gloy 1991; Horstmann 1990; Taylor 1956, p. 120–57). On the one hand, all genuine entities must be one. They must have some form of unity that distinguishes them as a distinct and cohering entity, rather than as a mere heap or aggregate. On the other hand, all entities must have, include, or contain manifold specificities. If entities were pure or simple unities, then they would not be differentiated. Most importantly, however, an adequate account of the structure of an entity must explain the relationship between the unity and the plurality of the thing, between the sense in which it is one and the sense in which it is many. In other words, thought must grasp how genuine difference or plurality can exist *in unity*. The problematic relation between unity and plurality manifests itself in various forms throughout Hegel's corpus, including the relationships between essence and appearance, substance and attribute, universal and particular, and the “I think” and the manifold of intuition.

Throughout his corpus, Hegel criticizes numerous philosophical projects that rely upon the mode of thought he designates as the “understanding”; that fail to grasp the essential relation between unity and plurality; and that therefore tend to efface one or the other. We can see this in his criticisms of both rational and empirical psychology. While rational psychology insists upon the simplicity or unity of the mind, it fails to explain how this unity relates to the manifold plurality of its empirical appearance. This conception of mind

therefore lacks all “concrete determination and content” (*Enc* § 378 A).² By contrast, empirical psychology rightly acknowledges and documents the manifest plurality and empirical content of mental life, but it fails to explain the ultimate unity of this plurality, and it therefore treats the mind as a “mere aggregate of independent forces, which stand only in the external relation of reciprocal causality” (*Enc* § 378 A). Therefore, neither rational nor empirical psychology grasps the true and inherent relation between the unity and plurality of the mind. Stated somewhat differently, neither approach to the mind grasps “the true unity of the particular and the universal” (*Enc* § 378 A).

After contrasting the failures of both empirical and rational psychology, Hegel makes the following, deeply significant, pronouncement:

Aristotle’s books on the soul ... are therefore still the best, perhaps the only work of speculative significance on this matter [i.e. the mind]. As its only essential aim, the philosophy of mind must seek to reintroduce the notion into our knowledge of mind, thereby unlocking the meaning of those Aristotelian books. (*Enc* § 378 A)

In very rough terms, Aristotle acknowledges the holistic, dynamic, and self-organizing nature of the mind, and this acknowledgement allows him to articulate the inherent relationship between the unity and plurality of mind.³ For Aristotle, the plurality of mind is *matter*, the range of apparent entities and processes that receive their specific *form* through an ongoing process oriented towards the mind’s unified and constitutive *end*. Of course, in Aristotle, the form-matter relation has many iterations. Thus, the nutritive soul consists in the complex process of self-organization that allows a plant or animal to appropriate materials from its environment and to transform them into its own unfolding, self-sustaining, and reproductive process. The motive soul is not a capacity simply appended to the process of nutritive growth, but rather a way of organizing the process of nutritive growth, one that allows for oriented navigation within an environment. Thus, with regards to the motive soul, the nutritive soul now appears as matter. Finally, when we come to the rational soul, the motive soul becomes the material. In other words, the rational soul is not superadded to the motive soul. On the contrary, it fundamentally penetrates and reforms the nutritive and motive processes, reorienting them towards the ultimate end of rational cognition.

² All Hegel translations are my own.

³ In discussing Hegel’s reliance upon Aristotle, I merely intend to establish a very basic conceptual framework for discussing Marx. For more developed and detailed discussions of Hegel’s interpretation and appropriation of Aristotle, see Ferrarin 2001 and de Laurentiis 2006.

Construing mind as a unified process that penetrates lower levels of organized matter and transforms them in accordance with its own orientation towards an end, Hegel rightly insists that mind is not “a mere aggregate of independent forces.” Instead, we must conceive all apparent mental entities or states, such as images, sense-data, concepts, desires, beliefs, and emotions, in terms of the larger processes that constitute them, the processes *from* which they receive their form and *towards* which they remain oriented. In turn, these processes themselves, including perception, memory, imagination, attention, anticipation, understanding, reason, and various forms of volitional action must be conceived in relation to the still larger and all-encompassing processes that form and unite them. Thus, for instance, human and animal perception cannot be analyzed to discover some common substratum or remainder. Instead, the rational and/or conceptual aspirations of the mind fundamentally transform the nature of perception, penetrating it at all levels. There is therefore no pre-conceptual level of human perceptual awareness (*Enc* § 447–8). The same point holds for emotion and desire, which rationality fundamentally restructures in accordance with the orientation of its ongoing activity (*Enc* § 472).

In contrast to rational psychology, which treats the mind as a “fixed thing,” and in contrast to empirical psychology, which treats the mind as a collection of given and externally related forces, Hegel insists that the mind is “absolute restlessness, pure activity.” He then articulates this pure activity in terms that draw upon both Kant’s and Fichte’s discussions of the relationship between the pure “I” and the manifold (*TWA* 6: 245–71). Though firmly embedded in the natural or material world, Hegel’s “mind” exists as a modified instantiation of the developmental and unifying tendencies of the Kantian or Fichtean “I.” Hegel says: “Despite its simplicity, the mind is differentiated in itself, for the ‘I’ posits itself in opposition to itself. That is, the ‘I’ objectifies itself and then returns ... to unity with itself. Thus the ‘I’ is with itself in its difference” (*Enc* § 381 A). Here we see, once again, Hegel’s fundamental question: how can “simplicity” be “differentiated in itself?” In response to this question, he reconceives Aristotelian form as the activity of the Kantian or Fichtean “I.” In Aristotelian terms, the form reaches down into the plurality of the matter. As an end-oriented process, the form structures, reorients, and integrates the matter, transforming it into aspects of itself.

Notably, if mind is a series of formed, oriented, and united processes, then mind need not be coextensive with either the brain or some private domain of consciousness. Instead, Hegel’s “mind” describes every process that human beings initiate and form as they create a collective social world. Therefore, in his *Philosophy of Mind*, Hegel considers not only psychology and phenomenology, but also anthropology, politics, and world history, which all describe various

processes by which mind continues to extend itself by forming the initially natural world. In this regard, we can add a new dimension to this Aristotelian language, a dimension that more directly anticipates Marx's thought. As Hegel says, "the 'I' posits itself in opposition to itself." In Aristotelian terms, the form posits itself in the matter insofar as it informs and transforms it. In terms that more directly recall the "I" and the human capacity to form a cultural world, the "I" posits itself in opposition to itself whenever it seeks to manifest or express itself in objective or material form, e. g., in language, practices, instruments, artworks, or institutions. Thus, as Hegel says, "the 'I' objectifies itself." It manifests itself in the manifold plurality of the object, which should – but often initially does not – express or reflect the "I's" conception of itself, that is, the ends which it takes to be constitutive for itself. Thus, objectification leads to alienation, which must ultimately be overcome, either through further transformation or else through reinterpretation, so that the "I" may be "with itself in its difference," that is, at home in the world that it makes.

In concluding our brief review of Hegel, we might note that this holistic and inherently processual conception of reality has complex epistemological implications. Specifically, it demands a hermeneutic approach to reality. On this view, every apparently immediate particular receives its form through the highly complex and ongoing processes that structure and employ it. This constitutive form is not immediately *in* the particular or part. Instead, this form involves the dynamic relation of the particular or part to various ongoing and interrelated developments. Accordingly, knowledge of the apparently immediate particulars requires mediation. It requires us to conceive the particular in terms of its ultimate place in a complex totality of dynamic relations. This, of course, suggests a familiar problem: it seems that we cannot properly grasp the parts until we have correctly conceived the whole, but we cannot conceive the whole until we have properly grasped the parts. In *The German Ideology*, as we shall see, Marx at least partially addresses this hermeneutic problem through the development of argumentative strategies that diverge radically from the positivistic and Baconian implications of his official rhetoric.

III

Despite the aggressively positivistic and seemingly anti-philosophical rhetoric of *The German Ideology*, with its repeated insistence upon "empirical verification" and "observation," we should note that Marx employs the term "empiricism" in a somewhat peculiar sense. First, he tends to use "empiricism" and "materialism" more or less interchangeably. Moreover, he distinguishes his "empiricism"

from what he calls “abstract empiricism.” Stating the same point somewhat differently, he distinguishes his “materialism” from “all previous forms of materialism,” from what he describes as merely “observing materialism.” We must carefully attend to these remarks, since they ultimately reveal Marx’s continued reliance upon broadly Hegelian conceptions of organic totality and the ontological priority of end-oriented process.

In his single passage on abstract empiricism, Marx says: “As soon as we present this active life-process, history ceases to be a collection of dead facts, as it is for the still abstract empiricists, but without becoming the merely imagined action of a merely imagined subject, as it is for the idealists” (*MEW* 3:27). The abstract empiricists grasp history as a “collection” of externally connected facts. This language clearly recapitulates Hegel’s critique of empirical psychology, and it suggests that the abstract empiricists fail to grasp the larger, genuine, and holistic unities that constitute social and historical reality. History is not a mere collection of facts, not an aggregate of stable entities that collide or interact in terms of stable patterns or laws. Instead, it consists of holistic unities that shape, inform, and integrate complex arrays of more basic materials. However, to move from an aggregated to an integrated conception of the social or historical manifold, we must recognize the central or foundational role that this “active life-process” plays in the constitution of social reality. In contrast to the abstract empiricists, the idealists do manage to grasp history as a *relatively unified process* or *action*, but they misconstrue the relative and merely emerging unity as the absolute unity of the action of a supreme agent, as “Mind” with a capital “M.” That is, they misconstrue this unity as an agency that somehow unfolds throughout the totality of human history, and that provides the highest form for the matter provided by the minds of individuals and peoples. Although Marx does not ground the holistic unities of social reality in the action of some supra-individual agency or mind, he does adopt the idealistic emphasis upon action or end-oriented process as the constitutive basis of unity.

In his roughly contemporaneous “Theses on Feuerbach,” Marx defends the ontological priority of action, and he again suggests that action grounds or constitutes the genuine unity of social and historical entities. “The principle shortcoming of all previous materialism,” he says in this First Thesis, “is that it conceives the thing, reality, the sensuous, only in terms of the form of the object or observation, not as sensual human activity, as practice” (*MEW* 3:5). This passage has sometimes been misinterpreted as a discussion of *our orientation towards reality*, not as a discussion of *the nature of reality itself* (cf. Brudney 1998, p. 227–42). On this interpretation, the First Thesis distinguishes between two stances that we might take towards reality, between a strictly theoretical contemplation of the object and a practical engagement with the object. This interpretation

finds some support in the Second Thesis, which might be read as advancing a pragmatic conception of truth, one that defines truth in terms of the capacity of given claims or theories to facilitate our practical aims, thus subordinating theory to practice. On this interpretation, the First Thesis rejects all strictly disinterested, theoretical, or scholastic contemplation of the world, advocating instead for practical engagement.

While this interpretation does echo certain broadly Marxist sentiments, it misses the principle import of the present passage. Read literally, the First Thesis contrasts two conceptions of reality, two rival ontologies. Careful attendance to the grammatical structure and specific wording of the passage makes it evident that Marx does not criticize materialism for its failure to approach reality *through* or *by means of* practice. Instead, he criticizes it for failing to grasp reality *as itself* sensual human activity, *as itself* having the form of “practice.”

In Thesis Nine, Marx again suggests that this failure to grasp the ontological priority of action necessarily leads materialism to embrace an atomistic and ultimately ahistorical conception of society. If action or practice, as end-oriented processes, integrate and form the material manifold of social reality, then the failure to grasp this action must lead to a disintegrated vision of social reality, one that treats it as a series of disconnected entities or facts. Thus Marx maintains: “The highest, which can be attained by observing materialism, that is, by a materialism that does not grasp sensuousness as practical activity, is the observation of single individuals and civil society” (*MEW* 3:7). Modern individuals frequently act and conceive themselves as if we they were discrete, independent, and self-interested units. Accordingly, we may be tempted to take these discrete and self-interested individuals as the basic explanatory units of societies, political structures, and historical periods. Against this view, Marx repeatedly insists that modern individuality represents a recent and potentially transitory manifestation of larger historical processes. Rather than focus on the interests, actions, and free contractual engagements of individuals, Marx insists that we must consider the larger economic processes that form these individuals; that have released them from their previously constitutive relationship to family and estate; and that create the conditions that largely dictate the contractual engagements into which they enter. While Marx repeatedly chastises ahistorical and atomistic forms of social explanation throughout his corpus, the Ninth Thesis expressly connects this error with a deeper ontological failing, that is, with the failure to grasp the basic role of “practical activity” or the “active life-process” in the constitution of social reality.

If social reality does indeed consist of relatively stable and atomistic entities that interact in terms of law-governed or probabilistic patterns, then history loses its potentially distinctive or defining quality, and it becomes more or less akin to

physics. In the world of the particles described by physics, different things continually happen, but these ever changing events do not yet constitute a history, given that the laws and particles remain the same. In physical explanations, we do not need to locate the *explanandum* within a specific temporal place. We must know the conditions that immediately preceded the event we seek to explain, but, once we have identified the brief temporal sequence of the causal chain, we have discovered a basic pattern that could equally occur at any time or place. History, by contrast, appears to be fundamentally distinct from physics, such that historical explanations must locate their *explanandum* within the specific contours of a particular epoch. If this is correct, then social reality cannot consist merely of discrete entities that interact in more or less law-governed ways. On the contrary, it must consist of larger, end-oriented, and shifting processes, in processes that fundamentally form and transform the pre-existing social manifold, that is, all inherited practices, customs, institutions, and technologies, integrating these form-matter composites within some new and more comprehensive form.

Drawing upon this line of thought, Marx insists that Feuerbach's materialism remains fundamentally ahistorical. For Feuerbach, "materialism and history completely diverge." In part, this criticism may simply refer to Feuerbach's universal and unchanging conception of the human essence. However, Marx's criticism seems to go beyond this, suggesting Feuerbach's failure to grasp the fundamental nature of history as such. After criticizing Feuerbach in these ways, Marx goes on to characterize history in terms of a process that recalls both Aristotle and Hegel. He says:

History is nothing but the succession of individual generations, each of which exploits the materials, the capital, and the productive forces they inherit from the previous generation. Therefore, on the one hand, each generation continues to employ the received activities under transformed conditions, and, on the other hand, it modifies the old conditions through a completely transformed activity (*MEW* 3:45).

Marx's crucial distinction between "activities" and "conditions" roughly recapitulates Aristotle's distinction between form and matter. Social reality consists principally in a series of techniques and procedures that we collectively employ to transform the given material world into objects that satisfy our ever-increasing desires. In short, production is a process of formation. Of course, production does not merely produce the material objects we desire. As it becomes more complex, it increasingly produces or forms the varied social conditions that regulate and facilitate material production. It thus forms the political and legal structures, customs, and educational practices that make production possible.

In their social formation, education, and training, each new generation acquires the processes and techniques that have previously served to transform various materials into their appropriate forms. However, as Marx notes, conditions themselves change, and these techniques must be adapted. Or, alternatively, we develop new techniques, and these techniques transform the conditions. In either case, each generation must appropriate and reorient the form-matter composites that it inherits.

IV

If social reality consists of complex, holistic, and developmental processes, then proper knowledge of the part and the temporal present always presupposes adequate knowledge of the social whole and the broader historical processes at work within it. While initial experience and the pursuit of knowledge may move from part to whole, the adequate presentation of knowledge must move from whole to part. The present must always be conceived in its intrinsic relations to past tendencies and future possibilities. It is never simply inert, self-contained, or given. The same holds for the parts: we only grasp the parts or facets of social reality when we conceive their function within very large, complex, and integrated processes. Thus the acceptance of a holistic and processual ontology forces us to address significant hermeneutical challenges.

In *The German Ideology*, Marx's highly Baconian rhetoric threatens to obscure his actual methodological procedures, his tendency to view every particular within the context of some processual and holistic totality that itself transcends and frames every possible experience. Marx purports to begin with "real individuals," with "premises" that can "be verified in a purely empirical way." This appears to suggest some direct and unmediated encounter with particular features, activities, and individuals as they really are. This rhetoric suggests that knowledge moves in an unproblematic and merely additive way from one part or particular to the next. In fact, the account of history, humanity, and thought that Marx here proposes moves from whole to part, developing a series of fundamental divisions that should orient us towards being as a whole, and that allow us to conceive various particulars and sub-regions of being within the right contextual framework.

In the early theoretical sections of *The German Ideology*, Marx considers how we ought to conceive and approach thought, particularly philosophical thought. If philosophical thought sets out to discover the basic categories, divisions, and structures that determine being in its totality, then, Marx insists, it can never simply proceed from itself to this ultimate end. In particular, thought does not

exist beyond the totality it seeks to conceive. Instead, it is a part of that totality, and it receives its basic orientation and direction from it. If we would conceive totality through thought, we must continually reflect upon and investigate thought's fragile and finite place within totality, and the ways that totality itself conditions, directs, distorts, and determines thought. More specifically, we must consider how thought emerges from and remains conditioned by the domains of human activity from which it emerges.

This brings us to Marx's so-called "first premise." He states: "The first presupposition of all human history is the existence of living human beings" (MEW 3: 20–1). On the surface, this claim appears self-evident but trivial. In reality, as his development or elaboration of this claim suggests, Marx takes this principle to express a range of complex and contentious assertions. Ultimately, Marx's development of this presupposition considers the fundamental difference between humans and other animals, particularly as it relates to the possibility and nature of history itself and the being of human beings. Noting that many capacities distinguish humans from animals – Marx mentions "religion" and "consciousness," though we might add language, reason, or the capacity for mathematics – Marx insists that the fundamental or essential difference between them involves the "production" of the "means of subsistence." Here we must carefully define "production" (MEW 3:21). After all, some animals transform the natural world to satisfy their needs. Birds build nests; bees construct hives; spiders spin webs; and some species of ants even engage in a basic form of agriculture. However, as designated by the term "production," the human formation of the natural environment differs from that of animals insofar as it involves the non-instinctual and unbounded creation and deployment of tools and techniques, and insofar as these tools and techniques themselves become the object of cultural transmission. This conception of production then allows us to define history and the being of human beings. As we have already seen, Marx defines history as the process by which techniques and productive practices are passed from one generation to the next, a process further complicated by the dialectical interaction between the techniques and the material world. New tools, techniques, and practices transform the conditions of the world, and the transformation of these conditions then calls forth new adaptations in existing tools, techniques, and practices.

Marx then goes on to define the being of human beings in terms that connect his philosophical anthropology with Hegel's discussion of externalization, alienation, and reconciliation. Marx insists that we should not conceive the modes, practices, or techniques of production simply as the means "for reproducing the physical existence of individuals." He continues: "Far more than this, these modes are the particular form of the individual's activity, the particular

way that they externalize [*äußern*] their life, their particular way of life. As individuals externalize their life, so they are" (*MEW* 3:21). Again, this claim is clearly ontological or metaphysical, not straightforwardly empirical: it specifies the fundamental, basic, or defining facet that determines what the individual is. More specifically, it claims that the individual is a particular form of activity, the process by which it organizes itself and its world in the production of the means of subsistence. Significantly, Marx states this point in terms that clearly allude to Hegel. In the formation of matter through a particular form of production, the individual "expresses" or "externalizes" herself. As Marx repeatedly notes, this process of externalization leads to the possibility of alienation and to the existence of the productive processes as something independent from the control of individuals. In all of this, Marx remains heavily dependent upon Hegel as he articulates a social and historical ontology, one that serves to guide observation in its approach to the whole and in its relation to the part.

As Marx's argument proceeds, he goes on to present a complex series of nested divisions that allow us to move from the totality to its most prominent sub-domains. He thus goes on to divide production into three moments, into (a) the production of objects that satisfy desire; (b) the production of new desires; and (c) the biological-cultural reproduction of human beings capable of sustaining current productive practices. He then goes on to provide a fourfold division of history, that is, of the total but periodically differentiated process of non-instinctual production. He suggests that we should distinguish the basic epochs in terms of the various forms of the division of labor and their correlated types of property ownership that inform the process of production. Then he focuses on the fundamental division of labor, the division between town and country. He then considers how, within the town, both industry and commerce develop and diverge, and he further considers how industry in the feudal period involves different roles, including that of master, apprentice, and day laborer.

Finally, after articulating the various divisions that emerge within the fundamental process of production, Marx turns to consider thought or consciousness as yet another emergent division or facet within this process. "At first," he says, "the production of ideas, representations and consciousness is immediately intertwined with the material activity of human beings" (*MEW* 3:26). In more fleshed out terms, we might say that theoretical forms of consciousness emerge from the partial frustrations of particular practices or aspects of production. Theoretical forms of consciousness seek to articulate the different aspects, surrounding contexts, and ultimate aims of the frustrated practice, often proceeding to show how this practice relates to the larger historical processes from which it emerged and towards which it remains oriented. In its quest to situate and potentially reform the particular practice within the larger and ultimately integrated processes

that surround it, theoretical consciousness cannot simply set out to acquire a greater and broader experience. We do not, as Althusser's and Marx's rhetoric sometime suggests, simply discard our initial assumptions and intellectual heritage and then go on to take a clear, unbiased, and comprehensive look at the world. Similarly, Marx does not simply reject the illusions of German Idealism, leave the land of his birth, and travel to France and then England, where he then simply opens his eyes and observes real political struggles and the real processes of industrialization. Instead, Marx begins with the theoretical traditions he received, and he uses them as his guide to experience. However, he does not simply or primarily ask: how does this theoretical consciousness represent the world? On the contrary, as he sets out to investigate the infinite manifold of the social world, he asks what the structures and processes of the larger totality must be like, such that they would generate this particular form of consciousness, at this particular social and historical point, with these particular distortions, abstractions, and obfuscations. Marx's critical engagement with Hegel's philosophy might best be construed in these terms. More generally, he seeks to determine how German Idealism and its various Young Hegelian transformations reveal the aspirations and frustrations of German intellectuals, as these represent localized manifestations of the larger aspirations and frustrations of the modern world. In a manner that anticipates Freudian psychoanalysis, Marx treats German philosophy and all other forms of theoretical consciousness as the sublimated manifestation of partially frustrated practical longings. Just as, for psychoanalysis, the dream both distorts and reveals the nature of the psyche, so theoretical consciousness, including Hegelian philosophy, both distorts and reveals the true contours of the socio-historical world. And just as the psychoanalyst requires the distorted dream to discover the truth, so Marx requires the distorted forms of theoretical consciousness to discover the real world.

Finally, while Marx ultimately rejects many features of Hegelian philosophy as fanciful distortions, he embraces two central metaphysical or ontological insights at the heart of Hegel's project. He accepts and continues Hegel's profound and deeply informative struggle to conceive the basic nature of reality as inherently holistic and as essentially dynamic. Therefore, if we seek to reconstruct some non-metaphysical vision of Hegelian philosophy, perhaps in some attempt to demonstrate its continued relevance, we unfortunately sever Hegel's philosophy from one of its more fruitful intellectual legacies, the social philosophy developed by Karl Marx.

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Author Index

- Althusser, Louis 197, 210
Anaxagoras 111, 125
Anscombe, G.E.M. 170, 176
Aristotle 1f., 29, 32, 35, 48, 75, 83f., 92,
95, 109–112, 115, 128, 156, 158, 181,
201, 206
Armstrong, David 117

Baumgarten, Felix 110
Beiser, Frederick 9f., 43f., 51f., 154, 157f.
Brandom, Robert 9f., 14f., 20f., 23f., 36,
150, 178
Brudney, Daniel 197, 204
Bubner, Rudiger 37
Buhle, Johann 137
Bungay, Stephen 55

Chomsky, Noam 189
Croce, Benedetto 29, 89, 142

Deleuze, Gilles 63f., 67
Derrida, Jacques 5, 139, 146
Descartes, René 29, 48, 150
Di Giovanni, George 27, 135, 167, 182f.
Dilthey, Wilhelm 72

Fackenheim, Emil 54
Feuerbach, Ludwig 81f., 198, 204, 206
Fichte, Johann Gottlieb 72, 95, 110, 136,
139–141, 144f., 181, 202
Findlay, John 54, 89, 93, 150
Foucault, Michel 189

Gadamer, Hans-Georg 30

Habermas, Jürgen 80, 84
Harris, Errol 45, 54, 56, 77, 90, 97, 153, 159
Hartmann, Klaus 43f., 46, 55, 150
Heidegger, Martin 1, 5, 89, 139, 146
Herder, Johann Gottfried 6, 72
Heydenreich, Carl 137
Honneth, Axel 71, 84f.
Houlgate, Stephen 9f., 14, 90, 152, 165f.

Hume, David 186
Hyppolite, Jean 80, 91

Jacobi, Friedrich Heinrich 46, 95, 139, 141,
144–145
Jäschke, Walter 46, 139, 141, 144f.

Kant, Immanuel 2, 4–6, 12f., 15, 18f., 21,
24, 27–31, 33–40, 44, 46, 51f., 59–61,
68, 72, 75, 83f., 90, 92f., 95, 109f.,
114–116, 119–130, 132, 135, 137–142,
144–146, 150–154, 156f., 165–167, 171,
176, 179, 181f., 202
Kolb, David 35, 43, 54, 150
Kreines, James 43, 150

Lauer, Quentin 54
Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm 48, 93, 150f.
Lessing, Gotthold Ephraim 145
Locke, John 182
Lowe, Jonathan 149, 156

Mah, Harold 197
Maker, William 43, 165f.
Mannheim, Karl 72
Marx, Karl 6, 80, 82, 89, 91, 104, 197–201,
203–210
McCumber, John 182f.
McDowell, John 31
McTaggart, John 54
Mendelssohn, Moses 145
Moore, Adrian 152, 159

Niethammer, Immanuel 45, 109
Nietzsche, Friedrich 4, 62f., 69

Parmenides 93
Pelczynski, Z.A. 71
Pinkard, Terry 9, 11, 43, 71, 150
Pippin, Robert 9f., 20f., 24, 43f., 52, 54f.,
71, 76, 78, 150, 152f., 176, 182
Plato 35, 48, 82–84, 95, 111, 125, 181, 190
Popper, Karl 89

- Rauner, Friedrich von 135
Rawls, John 71
Read, Stephen 116, 205
Reid, Jeffrey 182
Reinhold, Karl 135, 137
Restall, Greg 116
Ritter, Joachim 75
Rosenthal, John 197
- Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph 28,
136 f., 139, 141, 181
Schleiermacher, Friedrich 46
Simmel, Georg 72
- Solomon, Robert 71
Spaventa, Bertrando 98
Spinoza, Baruch 14, 93, 97, 145, 159, 181
Stace, Walter 55
- Taylor, Charles 9, 54, 71, 75–78, 200
Tennemann, Wilhelm 137
- Wallace, Robert 90, 92, 98
Williams, Robert 90, 98, 103
Wittgenstein, Ludwig 72, 189
Wolff, Christian 48, 93, 110, 135, 150, 153
Wood, Allen 30, 38, 71, 80, 167, 199

Subject Index

- Absolute, the 5, 46, 47, 49, 51, 52, 54, 55,
91, 92, 94, 96, 97, 141, 143, 168
- Agency 4, 38, 72, 74–75, 78–80, 131,
163–164, 172, 174, 177–179, 189, 204
- Ancient Greek philosophy 48, 110, 115, 120,
124–125, 155, 158–159, 181, 200
- Appetite 98–100, 102–103
- Atheismusstreit* 143
- Atomism 113
- Autonomy 21, 39, 50, 62–63., 67–69, 73,
77–78, 81, 141, 145, 165, 178
- Being, doctrine of 45, 49, 50
- Christianity 92
- Community 74–75, 80, 85, 164, 182, 194
- Concept, the 6, 11, 13, 18, 23–24, 27, 31–
32, 35–37, 65, 67–68, 165–179
- Doctrine of 6, 167–168
- Syllogism of 168, 171, 173, 175–178
- Concreteness 114
- Conscience 79
- Consciousness 2, 11–12, 22–23, 46, 69,
82, 91, 93, 94, 98–99, 102–103, 140,
144, 153, 158, 185, 187, 191–193, 202,
208–210
- Cosmology 37, 48, 53, 54, 122, 125, 151
- Culture 11, 94, 141, 142, 144, 146, 181, 195
- Deontology 79
- Desire 22–23, 91, 99, 202, 206, 209
- Determinacy 32, 64–65, 67
- Dialectics 72, 80–84
- Dialogue 80–84
- Ding an sich* (see Thing in itself)
- Duplicity 140, 142
- Duty 11, 178
- Empirical science 62
- Empiricism 46, 93–95, 112, 155, 197, 199–
200, 203–204
- Enlightenment 76, 142–145
- Epistemology 18, 28–29, 59–60, 62, 68–
69, 93, 95–96, 98, 150, 152, 181, 191
- Essence, doctrine of 34, 45, 94, 97
- Ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*) 75, 79, 84–85, 164,
177–178
- Faith 92–93, 96, 142–146
- Finitude (see also Infinity) 12, 14, 16, 18,
38, 138, 140–141, 144
- Freedom 4, 11, 24, 39–40, 67, 72–78, 84,
100, 104, 166, 177–178, 190
- Geist* (see Spirit)
- God 5, 11, 33, 36, 46–47, 49, 53, 55, 90,
92, 94, 97–98, 102, 123, 131, 142–146,
150–152, 182, 187, 195
- Good, the 79, 83, 173–175
- Syllogism of 175, 178
- Grammar 184, 188–189, 193
- Historical materialism 89, 104
- Historical school of law 72
- History 3, 29, 39–40, 43, 54, 74, 91, 104,
137–138, 144, 164, 181, 195, 202, 204–
208
- Of philosophy 1, 5, 35–37, 56, 94–95,
136–137, 140, 146
- Holism 4, 9–11, 28, 31, 35, 85, 90, 158,
194, 199, 200–201, 203–204, 207, 210
- Human beings 39, 91, 113–114, 140, 150,
157, 171, 202, 208–209
- Idealism 19, 68 73, 90, 150, 154, 156, 210
- Subjective 181, 191
- Transcendental 21, 110, 152–153
- Idea, the 13, 36, 52, 54, 131, 138–140, 172,
177, 182
- Immediacy 63, 79, 96, 103, 155, 188
- Individualism 84
- Individuality 39, 62–68, 100, 141, 158, 205
- Infinity 47, 51, 54, 65, 91, 95, 97, 137–138,
140, 142, 150, 152, 154, 173
- Bad/spurious 13, 16–20, 99, 103
- True 3–4, 11–24, 54, 103
- Intellect 140, 145
- Intelligence 152, 164, 186–188, 190, 192, 194

- Intention (*Absicht*) 163, 174, 177, 198
 Intersubjectivity 84, 101–102, 181–182, 191, 194
 Intuition 13, 46, 61–62, 93, 95, 127, 144, 151, 185, 192, 200

 Labor 91, 100, 102, 209
 Language 1, 4, 6, 112–113, 116, 182–195, 203, 208
 – Natural 1120, 156, 188
 – Spoken 82–84, 189
 Linguistic turn 155, 182–184, 190
 Logic 3–5, 9, 11–12, 19, 24, 27, 30–32, 45, 48–50, 62, 65, 68–69, 81, 83, 90, 92–93, 97, 102, 105, 109–116, 119–132, 135–136, 150–151, 153, 165–166, 176–177, 182–184, 192, 194
 – Dialectical 4, 81, 83, 114
 – Formal 62, 92, 114, 116, 128, 127
 – General 110, 125–128, 150
 – Objective 12, 30, 45, 49, 126, 129, 135
 – Speculative 5, 11, 45, 90, 92–94, 97, 102, 105, 119–122, 126–131, 153
 – Transcendental 5, 19, 69, 92, 110, 119–122, 125–130, 132
 Logical Empiricism 89–90, 155
Logos 111

 Marxism 91, 199
 Master-slave dialectic 22, 100, 104
 Memory 6, 185–194, 202
 Meta-cognition 32–33
 Metaphysics
 – Definition of 59, 68–69, 92
 – General and special 44, 53, 150–152
 – Post-critical (see post-Kantian)
 – Post-Kantian 12, 20, 24, 121, 129, 149–150, 152, 159, 163
 – Pre-critical (see pre-Kantian)
 – Pre-Kantian 2, 4–5, 12, 18–19, 48, 52, 90, 109–110, 131, 151–152, 155, 181
 – Social role of 122–123
 Method 12, 18, 37, 69, 81–82, 84, 128–129, 164–168, 176, 178–179, 184, 191–192, 198, 207
 Monism 9, 43, 76, 81

 Naturalism 4, 6, 84, 149, 153, 155, 159
 Natural science 40
 Nature 2–3, 17, 21, 24, 36–37, 39–40, 52–54, 60, 91–92, 112–114, 119, 150, 155, 159, 177, 182, 185–188, 194
 – Second nature 73, 75, 78
 Negation 14–17, 23, 65, 67, 97, 99–100, 102, 104, 150, 166, 174–175, 186, 195
 Neo-Aristotelianism 72
 Nominalism 64, 156
 Non-contradiction, principle of 61–63, 68, 96–97, 150
 Normativity 21, 24, 37–39, 113, 227
Noumenon 60
Nous 3, 111, 125

 Objective thoughts 111
 Objectivity, three attitudes to 93
 Ontology 1, 3, 5–6, 18, 23–24, 29–30, 37, 44, 48, 53, 59–60, 62, 68–69, 75, 110, 122, 125, 150–151, 183, 191, 195, 207, 209
 Onto-theology 2, 146
 Ordinary understanding 138

 Panentheism 5, 98
 Particularity, Particulars (see also Universality, Singularity) 16, 63–67, 81, 83, 96, 99–101, 112, 129, 159, 168, 172, 178, 185, 187, 192, 201, 203, 207–209
 Physics 32, 40, 114, 117, 123, 157, 206
 Positivism 1, 6, 154–156, 197, 199, 200, 203
 Praxis 91, 102, 104, 182
 Presuppositionlessness 50, 96, 152, 166
 Protestantism 131, 141
 Psychology, empirical 200–204
 – Psychology, rational 48, 53, 122, 125, 150–151, 200–202
 Purpose 77–78, 163, 171–178

 Quality and quantity 64–65, 101, 104, 110, 167, 170

- Realphilosophie* 2, 24, 37, 40, 73, 81, 119, 131, 145, 176–177
- Reason 5, 11–13, 18, 20–23, 33, 38–40, 50–54, 59, 62–63, 73–74, 165–169, 172–174, 177–184, 193–197, 101–105, 110, 123–124, 129–132, 137–140, 143, 145, 155–158, 165–167, 170, 179, 187–194, 202, 208
- And faith 143, 145–146
 - Practical 38, 165–167, 170, 175, 177
 - Speculative 95–97, 101, 124, 126–127, 129, 184, 194
 - Theoretical 12–13, 38, 122, 156, 165, 175
- Religion 5, 43, 49, 52, 55, 92, 123, 136, 144, 146, 208
- Representation 21, 32, 92, 94, 96, 98, 126, 186, 194
- Right 2, 11, 46, 71, 73, 79, 175, 178
- Right Hegelianism 154
- Scholasticism 2, 5, 33, 48, 95–96, 120, 122, 125, 195
- Self-consciousness 4, 11–12, 18, 20–24, 61, 91–92, 95, 98–104, 191–192
- Self, the 76, 79, 81, 150–151
- Sense-perception 93, 96–98, 104, 155
- Sensibility (*see also* Sense-perception) 61, 125, 130, 144, 151
- Sensuousness 205
- Singularity, Singulars (*see also* Universality, Particularity) 13, 63, 91, 99–100, 103, 108, 156, 170, 173, 175, 178
- Sittlichkeit* (*see* Ethical life)
- Skepticism 3, 22, 98, 124, 190
- Sophists 82–83
- Speculation 27, 38, 52, 71, 80, 140, 144, 152, 198
- Speech 20, 82–84
- Spirit (*Geist*) 2, 6, 13, 17–18, 23, 39–40, 43, 50, 53, 71, 73–75, 77–81, 84–85, 97, 119, 121–123, 127, 132, 142–143, 164, 176–178, 182–188, 193–195
- Absolute 5, 37–38, 52, 54, 72, 75, 97, 100, 104, 131, 164, 178
 - Finite 36, 92
 - Objective 4, 37, 72–75, 84, 131, 163–165, 274–279
 - Subjective 37, 72–73, 131, 177
- State, the 38–40
- Stoicism 22, 98
- Subject 3, 5, 21, 73, 876–77, 79, 91, 95, 99, 103, 121, 129–133, 168, 176, 186, 189–191, 204
- And object 30–31, 68–69, 76, 92, 98–99, 130, 192–194
 - And substance 43, 75, 78
- Syllogism 2, 6, 165–173, 177–178, 192
- Disjunctive 113
 - Formal 170, 176, 192
 - Of action 174–178
 - Of determinate being 169–171, 176
 - Of immediate realization 173
 - Practical 170, 172, 176
 - Reflexive 170
 - Theoretical 169
- Synthetic a priori knowledge 59, 61, 69, 126, 151
- Teleology 6, 77, 137, 150, 171–172, 174
- Theocentrism 38
- Theology 1, 48, 53, 55, 90, 92, 98, 122, 125, 143, 151
- Thing in itself (*Ding an sich*) 13, 30–31, 33, 68, 121, 126
- Thinking/thought 30, 32, 182–183, 189, 191
- Finite 19, 94, 97
 - Infinite 19
 - Speculative 122–125, 132
- Truth 5, 18, 28, 32, 35, 46, 62, 68, 82–83, 92–97, 102, 109, 112–114, 116, 125–127, 130, 132, 138, 141–144, 155, 167, 190–191, 193–194, 205
- Understanding, the (*Verstand*) (*see also* Reason) 5, 12–13, 22, 32, 35, 46–48, 54, 96, 110, 113, 122–123, 125–127, 129–130, 137, 140, 145, 150, 156–158, 185, 192–195
- Universality (*see also* Particularity, Singularity) 63–68, 96, 99–101, 168–170, 191
- Universal, the 65–66, 82, 96, 99, 201
- Will, the 67, 78–79, 165

